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Rolling changes in Russian foreign policy: divergent reactions to upheavals in the post-Soviet space and national role conceptions

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Doctorate

The University of Edinburgh

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Abstract of Thesis

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Despite the increased interest in the analysis of Russian foreign policy (RFP), current approaches leave much unexplained. Many existing studies use either macro-theoretical approaches or are very empirical. Furthermore, discussions about Russia's international behaviour are often politicised and largely normative. In order to address these gaps the project uses the role theoretical approach which focuses on leaders' perceptions and the interactions between internal and external factors. Empirically, it examines Russia's reactions to the 2003-4 colour revolutions in Georgia and Ukraine, the 2008 Five-Day War and the Euromaidan revolution. The thesis argues that divergent reactions to these crises result from a profound change in the leadership perceptions of Russia's international duties. Consequently, a shift in dominant national role conceptions from Western partner to the defender of Russian compatriots resulted in more assertive foreign policy behaviour exemplified by the intervention in South Ossetia and the annexation of Crimea. The research argues that RFP remains largely pragmatic and that foreign policy-making processes in Russia are more complex and include more actors than commonly assumed. It also contributes to role theory, by linking the concepts of strategic use of roles and role change, and analysing contestation processes in a (semi-)authoritarian state. Consequently, it broadens the understanding of foreign policy formation in non-democracies.

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Introduction

There have been many changes in Russian foreign policy (RFP) since the end of the Cold War, with Russia's conduct in the post-Soviet space and its increasingly assertive reactions to upheavals in this region being the main area of concern. These changes are widely known but their causes are subject of a fierce debate. There are numerous competing perspectives and explanations on how Russia acts in the international arena and as Russia has re-emerged as an important global actor, the need to understand its foreign policy decisions has become one of the major tasks of contemporary international relations (IR).

Discussions about Russia's international behaviour are often politicised and largely normative and, therefore, there is a deficit of objective research that tries to avoid bias. Furthermore, although RFP has been broadly examined, mechanisms behind its foreign policy decisions are still subject to heated debates and various analyses. Questions about Moscow's motivations and factors shaping foreign policy decisions are at the centre of them. Scholars debate the importance of various factors and argue whether Russia's international actions are revisionist and expansionist (Lucas, 2008; Sherr, 2013; Umland, 2016) or reactive and focused on protection of national interests (Mearsheimer, 2014; Sakwa, 2015; Tsygankov, 2015 - chapter two thoroughly analyses these different approaches to RFP). In addition, existing studies use either macro-theoretical approaches or are very empirical. This research aims to bridge this gap by being theoretically informative and simultaneously examining empirically significant events. It strives to contribute to the understanding of RFP and explain changes in Moscow's international behaviour by analysing the causes and the mechanisms behind foreign policy decisions. Consequently, the study aims to enhance the analytical component by applying a multilateral theoretical framework which focuses on leaders' perceptions and the interactions between internal and external factors. In order to provide new understanding and combine different factors, I will use the role theoretical approach that considers states as actors who behave in accordance with roles with which their leaders identify them (Adigbuo, 2007, p. 88) and that is uniquely positioned to analyse the interplay between foreign policy decision makers and the constraints imposed by the domestic and international system (Breuning, 2017). Given the multi-causal theoretical framework, this research will combine two qualitative methods: process-tracing and content analysis.

Empirically the study examines Russia's reactions[1] to the 2003-04 colour revolutions in Georgia and Ukraine as well as the 2008 crisis in the Georgian breakaway republic of South Ossetia and the 2013/14 Euromaidan revolution in Ukraine. In reaction to these two sets of similar upheavals in the post-Soviet space, the Russian government acted in a completely different and increasingly assertive way. In 2003-04 Moscow tacitly approved the regime change in Tbilisi during the Rose Revolution and assisted the new Georgian leadership during the Adjaran crisis. One year later, the Kremlin tried to prevent a similar scenario during the Orange Revolution in Ukraine but when this plan backfired, Moscow did not decide to take any radical steps and instead, recognised the new Ukrainian President and was ready to cooperate with him as well as with the West who had supported Ukrainian opposition. On the other hand, in August 2008 during the crisis in South Ossetia Russia intervened militarily, while after the Euromaidan revolution in Ukraine, decided to annex Crimea and support pro-Russian separatists in Eastern Ukraine. Why were these reactions so different? I will argue that they result from a profound change in Russia's national role conceptions (NRCs) between these two sets of events. NRCs refer to policymakers' own definitions of decisions, rules and actions suitable for their states. These ideas of appropriate orientations or functions define the range of acceptable foreign policy behaviours (Holsti, 1970; Hansel and Moller, 2015). Consequently, the aim of this research is the analysis of changes in RFP through the examination of shifts in dominant NRCs over time in order to understand what drives them and how they influence RFP behaviour.

The scholarship on RFP lacks analytically informed approaches that combine different levels of analysis and bring together various internal, external and ideational factors (see chapter 2). Likewise, the literature lacks a holistic approach combining the above-mentioned upheavals. Different crises are taken out from broader context. The latest events in Ukraine are analysed separately from the Five-Day War and separately from the colour revolutions, which have been widely analysed from liberal theories and democracy promotion points of view (Lane, 2009; Solonenko, 2009; Stewart, 2009). I will, however, treat these events as elements of broader phenomena occurring in RFP. Consequently, following Götz (2017), I consider the last reaction, that is the annexation of Crimea and support for pro-Russian separatists, as only one part of a much bigger story. These four cases illustrating completely

[1] Throughout the thesis when using terms such as 'Russia's reaction' or 'Russia's behaviour', the author means the Russian government.

different reactions to two similar sets of events will help to address the research puzzle and answer the following research questions:

- Why were Russia's reactions to these two sets of events so different?
- What were the sources of change in Russia's national role conceptions?
- How did shifts in dominant national role conceptions affect changes in Russian foreign policy?

These topics are important because in their core are questions about factors and processes that shape RFP behaviour. As such, the study aims to address literature on RFP and foreign policy-making processes in this country. However, it also speaks to broader IR and foreign policy analysis (FPA) literature, especially regarding different approaches to the analysis of foreign policy in non-democratic states. This research addresses the above questions arguing that changes in Russia's dominant NRCs took place due to the combination of internal and external as well material and ideational factors. Consequently, it strives to demonstrate that these changed perceptions of international duties and responsibilities led to different reactions to the upheavals in the post-Soviet space.

Furthermore, the study explores various processes shaping RFP and contends that upon closer examination, one can discern that foreign policy debate in Russia goes beyond the top decision-makers, foreign policy-making processes include different actors and are not necessarily less complex than those in domestic politics. Indeed, it will demonstrate that studies of RFP should go beyond President Putin and should also include the changing circle of his advisers. In addition, it will show that it is important to take into account NRCs advocated by opposition and public opinion and examine their expectations of the state's international duties as well as to look at the Russian parliament which has a strong symbolic role. As such, this research indicates that one can speak about managed pluralism (Balzer, 2003) not only in Russian domestic politics but also in the foreign policy realm. Consequently, it argues that even though opposition and public opinion may not play a key role in RFP decision-making, it is important to examine role contestation processes among these actors. Indeed, I will show that Russian leaders adopt NRCs advocated by the opposition, especially when they are popular among public opinion. Finally, the study contends that changes in Russia's dominant NRCs that took part during the upheavals resulted from strategic[2] use of roles, such as the defender of compatriots living abroad. As such, the research will

[2] To ensure consistency with role theory literature, the term 'strategic' is used throughout the study, although 'tactical' or 'instrumental' could be more appropriate.

demonstrate that one can speak about different types of role change: incremental long term shifts in the understanding of states' international responsibilities and short-term strategic changes to justify foreign policy actions.

Foreign policy (analysis) and the four upheavals in the post-Soviet space

This section provides a definition of *foreign policy* and introduces *foreign policy analysis* (FPA). It also speaks about *foreign policy change* and briefly describes changes in RFP after the collapse of the Soviet Union. In the second part, I present the four case studies of which empirical part of the research consists and develop some arguments about the utility of the role theoretical analysis in this study.

Foreign policy is conceptualised in various ways in the literature. This research will use Hermann's (1990, p. 5) definition which sees foreign policy as 'a goal- oriented or problem-oriented program by authoritative policymakers (or their representatives) directed toward entities outside the policymakers' political jurisdiction'. Hermann (1990, p. 5) explains that such a plan deals with problems and pursues goals that involve some kind of 'action toward foreign entities'. Consequently, foreign policy analysis (FPA) can be defined as 'subfield of international relations that takes as its theoretical focus those human beings who make and implement the foreign policy of a collective, usually, but not always, a nation-state. Those decision-makers stand at the point of intersection between forces external to and internal to the nation-state that bears on the choice at hand' (Hudson, 2015, p. 1). FPA engages with 'the multiplicity of forces, internal and external, that affect foreign policy decision making. These may be structural forces, ideational forces, or material forces' (Hudson, 2017, p. 5). As such, FPA aims to explain foreign policy decisions that Brighi and Hill (2012, p. 166) define as 'heightened moments of commitment in a perpetual process of action, reaction, and further action at many different levels and involving a range of different actors'.

The study largely revolves around the notion of *foreign policy change*, which 'entails the redirection to a lesser or greater extent of a state's foreign policy' (Blavoukos and Bourantonis, 2017, p. 1). IR scholars differ in conceptualisation of 'change' and its various typologies will be helpful in examining different shifts that took place in RFP. Skidmore (1994) pondering over the pace and efficiency of change, distinguishes 'sporadic' and 'evolutionary' ones. Goldmann (1988, p. 10) considers change as 'either a new act in a given situation or a given act in a situation previously associated with a different act'. Others (Hermann, 1990; Rosati, 1994) speak about different levels of foreign policy change. For instance, Hermann

(1990, p. 5) writes about (1) 'adjustment changes', which are minor shifts occurring in the level of effort; (2) 'program changes', which are made in the methods or means by which the goal or problem is addressed; (3) 'problem/goal changes', which include replacement of international aims; and (4) 'international orientation changes', which involve shifts in states' entire orientation toward world affairs (see more in chapter 2).

There have been significant changes in RFP since the end of the end of the Cold War. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the leadership of the new Russian state tried to establish friendly relations with the West and integrate their country into the Western-led system of international relations. Apart from President Boris Yeltsin, this course was mainly pursued by his foreign minister Andrei Kozyrev. The focus on cooperation with the West and economic reforms meant that Russia paid less attention to the post-Soviet space. However, already in the mid-1990s this openly pro-Western attitude began to lose its momentum. The replacement of Kozyrev by more pragmatist Yevgeny Primakov symbolised change in RFP course. The new foreign minister advocated multi-vector foreign policy which meant that Russia still wanted to work with the West but also paid more attention to Asia, the Middle East and especially the post-Soviet area. At the beginning of the Millennium Yeltsin was replaced by Vladimir Putin, an ex-KGB agent and an ex-deputy of the liberal mayor of St Petersburg, Anatoly Sobchak. Initially, Putin largely continued Primakov's foreign policy but also used opportunities to strengthen cooperation with the West, especially with the USA after the 9/11 terrorist attacks. However, since the beginning of Putin's presidency his foreign policy has undergone several significant shifts exemplified by divergent reactions to the crises in the post-Soviet space, which are presented in the next section.

As the objective of the study is to understand changes in RFP, the four upheavals described below are ideal cases because, representing Moscow's various reactions to two, at least seemingly, similar sets of events, they are highly comparable. In addition, the selected crises are data-rich cases, which helps to avoid potential bias and will enable me to answer more questions and what is particularly important, infer using process-tracing method.

The Rose Revolution[3] was the first colour revolution in the post-Soviet region and inspired protests in Ukraine and Kyrgyzstan. It took place in November 2003 and was triggered by new presidential and parliamentary elections in Georgia. The revolution culminated in the ouster of President Eduard Shevardnadze and brought to power pro-western leader Mikhail Saakashvili. Despite Russia's suspicions about Saakashvili, Putin's

[3] The description of the cases was largely taken from my MSc by Research thesis.

initial reaction was cautious (Stent, 2014, p. 109). What is the most interesting, however, is what followed. May 2004 was characterised by a very tense situation between Saakashvili's supporters and Aslan Abashidze, the leader of the Autonomous Republic of Adjara. The new President wanted to end Abashidze's increased policy of separatism and militarization and as a result the situation was heading for an armed solution. What prevented a military clash was an intervention from Putin who sent his foreign minister, Igor Ivanov, to calm the situation and find the solution. In effect, Abashidze resigned and left for Moscow (Illarionov, 2009, p. 55).

The Orange Revolution in Ukraine, which took place one year later, is considered the most important among the colour revolutions because of Ukraine's strategic, economic and historical significance to Russia. It started in November 2004 after the electoral fraud in the run-off vote of presidential elections won by Victor Yanukovych (Quinn-Judge and Zarakhovich, 2004). Protests succeeded when Ukraine's Supreme Court ordered repetition of voting which was won by the opposition's candidate Victor Yushchenko. Although before elections, Russia's only goal was to 'keep Ukraine in the sphere of Russian influence, and, at a minimum, to maintain their existing relationship' (Petrov and Ryabov, 2006, p. 146), after Yushchenko's victory President Putin refrained from any radical steps and did not decide for any kind of military or separatist solutions.

In August 2008, contrary to its reaction to the Rose Revolution, Russia did not help to prevent military clashes and additionally, invaded Georgian territory. The Russo-Georgian **Five-Day War** was the first case since 1979 when Russia crossed national borders to attack a sovereign state (Cornell and Starr, 2009, p. 3). This war was a culmination of a period of intensive and worsening relations between Georgia and the breakaway Georgian territory of South Ossetia as well as between Georgia and Russia. In response to Saakashvili's attack on South Ossetia, Russia invaded Georgian territory and stopped close to the capital, Tbilisi. Furthermore, in the aftermath of the war, Russia recognised independence of two Georgian separatist provinces: South Ossetia and Abkhazia.

The beginnings of **the Euromaidan revolution (also Ukraine crisis)** in 2013 were similar to those of the Orange Revolution. Once again, Ukrainians gathered on the Independence Square (Maidan) in the centre of Kyiv in order to protest against the president, government and corruption. This time, however, the main precipitating factor was President Yanukovych's refusal to sign the Association Agreement with the European Union. During the protests, which lasted three months, over 100 people were killed (Kyivpost, 2014). After the

settlement agreement between the government and opposition brokered by the European Union foreign ministers, Ukrainian President Yanukovych fled from Kiev (Baunov et al., 2015). After these events, Russia annexed the Crimean Peninsula and began to support pro-Russian separatists in Eastern Ukraine regions of Donetsk and Luhansk. The conflict in Eastern Ukraine has continued to this day and has taken more than 10,000 lives.

In both sets of upheavals there was an issue with a breakaway part of the country in Georgia and a wave of protests that led to a change of leadership in Ukraine. But why, even though the Russian top leadership was virtually unchanged, were reactions to the prior and subsequent events so different? This question leads to other important, related ones: which factors shaped Russian decisions regarding the four upheavals? Was the decision about the annexation of Crimea a deviation arising from the situation in Ukraine or did it result from a longer trend? Which changes in the international structure drove Moscow to more aggressive reactions in 2008 and 2014? Or maybe internal factors were decisive? If yes, which internal factors played the greatest role? Did President Putin's beliefs change or there were important shifts in his circle of advisers that influenced RFP behaviour? What was the significance of the leadership perceptions of various external and internal events? How did these perceptions inform foreign policy decisions regarding upheavals in the post-Soviet space? Were these new, more assertive reactions contested internally, both by elites and public opinion?

Addressing these questions and critically analysing factors and mechanisms behind Russia's reactions will require going beyond conventional unit-level accounts of RFP. Applying role theory and using a multi-level model, I want to show that a change in the leadership understanding of Russia's NRCs, that is perception of the state's international duties and responsibilities as well as its place in the world, led to different reactions to these two sets of crises. Roles can limit foreign policy options and decisions because certain foreign policy behaviours are associated with certain roles (Grossman 2005, p. 337). Indeed, I will seek to demonstrate that pro-cooperative NRCs that were dominant among Russian leaders during the Rose and Orange Revolution precluded more radical reactions to these upheavals. Furthermore, the NRC framework applied in the study emphasizes that changes in international and domestic factors 'are interpreted by decision makers and do not have a direct and independent effect on changes in foreign policy behaviour' (Breuning 2011, p. 31). As such, this framework will enable me to focus on the interactions between internal and external sources of foreign policy and on decision makers' perceptions of them. Last but

not least, role theory will allow for the analysis of different domestic actors, other than top decision-makers, that can shape RFP behaviour. Through the examination of domestic role contestation between elites as well as between elites and the public, the analysis will show how changes in NRCs translate into changes in RFP behaviour and should help to answer to what extent and in which circumstances these actors can influence processes shaping Russia's international actions.

Intended contribution

Applying a multi-level theoretical model, taking a view across time, and analysing and comparing causal mechanisms, the study aims to account for Russia's changing behaviour in the post-Soviet space and explain its different reactions to the upheavals in Ukraine and Georgia. However, apart from the empirical purpose, this research has broader goals of enriching literature on RFP, role theory and more generally, foreign policy of non-democratic states. First, the project aims to contribute to the understanding of RFP, among others, by challenging the popular image of President Putin running everything (see Galeotti, 2019; also Lo, 2003). Furthermore, and related, I want to focus on changes in RFP decision-making processes and their influence on Russia's international behaviour. As such, this research strives to show that apart from the president, there are also other actors who should be taken into account and that changing power relations between them have impact on RFP. Scholars (see Balzer, 2003; Sakwa, 2011; Martus, 2017) write about complexities and contestation of domestic politics in Russia, but this research seeks to demonstrate that foreign policy realm is an equally complex area where different actors, interests and ideas clash. Consequently, I want to explore how foreign policy debate affects the Kremlin's international decisions and what role opposition and public opinion play in these processes. More generally, the study seeks to deepen the understanding of interactions of internal and external factors that shape Russia's international actions. Last but not least, as there are conflicting arguments about changes in President Putin that led to more ideologically driven foreign policy (Sergunin, 2014; Wood, 2016; for a contradictory argument see Dyson and Parent, 2018), by analysing the use of NRCs, the project aims to examine whether that is the case or the use of ideology and nationalism was rather opportunistic and RFP remained pragmatic. Pragmatism is defined in terms of an absence of ideology and emphasis on realisation of material goals, both domestic and international ones (Miller and Sullivan de Estrada, 2017, pp. 30–31). As such, pragmatic motivations may be in line with dominant NRCs

(e.g. the importance of relations with the West and dominance of the partner of the West role) but may also be separate from them and then new NRCs can be employed strategically (e.g. the defender of compatriots role, which helped to achieve geopolitical and regime survival goals).

Second, this research seeks to contribute to the application of role theory to foreign policy analysis, particularly in non-democratic regimes. Cantir and Kaarbo (2016, p. 2) question domestic consensus over a state's appropriate roles. The study strives to address this criticism and demonstrate whether contestation processes (both horizontal and vertical) can take place in (semi-) authoritarian states and if so, whether they are strong enough to influence shifts in dominant NRCs promoted by decision-makers. In addition, this research aims to identify actors with NRCs other than those promoted by the leadership and channels through which they seek to influence the perception of states' international duties. Furthermore, it intends to broaden understanding of role change by analysing the necessary scope conditions and demonstrating mechanisms which were behind such changes, and by empirically examining whether shifts in dominant NRCs precede changes in states' foreign policy behaviour or the other way round. Consequently, the study will link the concepts of role change and the strategic use of roles analysing the conditions under which shifts in dominant NRCs have strategic character and new roles are employed to justify foreign policy actions.

Third, this research intends to contribute to some broader questions which FPA and IR scholarship asks, such as those regarding the agent-structure nexus, and especially domestic processes shaping states' foreign policy. Weeks and Crunkilton (2016) write about a widespread view of non-democratic leaders as being unconstrained and unaccountable. The study aims to challenge this view and contribute to the understanding of the role of various factors and actors in shaping foreign policy of non-democratic states. Furthermore, Weeks (2012) writes that there is substantial variation in attitudes to conflict among authoritarian regimes. This indicates that also important differences in foreign policy making processes can be expected among non-democratic states. As such, this research seeks to contribute to the literature on foreign policy decision-making in hybrid regimes, as Russia is often considered (see Levitsky and Way, 2002; Balzer, 2003; Hale, 2010; Petrov et al., 2014). Finally, the study has a modest goal of contributing to the application of process tracing to role theory and FPA through the combination of macro- and mid-level processes in the

analysis of role contestation, and changes in dominant NRCs and states' foreign policy behaviour.

Structure of the thesis

This thesis consists of nine chapters. The first one introduces domestic aspects related to foreign policy in Russia. As such, it describes the main actors in foreign policy-making, such as the President, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Presidential Administration. In addition, it presents state of the art in literature on the role of opposition and public opinion in the formulation of Russia's international agenda. Finally, it touches upon foreign policy decision-making processes in Russia. The second chapter analyses different approaches to the analysis of RFP (geopolitical, domestic, ideational) and reflects on their strengths and weaknesses. The second part of this chapter presents role theory focusing on the concept of role and NRCs framework as well as on the issues of role change and domestic role contestation. The third chapter deals with methodological side of the study. It describes two main research methods: content analysis and process tracing as well as includes a codebook which presents detailed information about NRCs and the way they were coded. Chapters four to seven thoroughly analyse four case studies: the Rose Revolution, the Orange Revolution, the Five-Day War and the Euromaidan Revolution presenting dominant NRCs in each period, factors and processes that led to their dominance, and examining the influence of these conceptions on the government's reactions to the upheavals. The following chapter analyses and compares findings from the case studies and draws some broader conclusions about different factors shaping RFP behaviour. Finally, the last chapter summarises the most important findings of the research and their implications for RFP, role theory and more generally, FPA and IR scholarship. It also reflects on the study's limitations and future research avenues.

1. Internal factors in Russian foreign policy

There is a growing consensus that internal factors are important in the analysis of Russian foreign policy (RFP). In general, due to the politicisation of foreign policy it has become part of domestic political struggles and Russia is no exception in this respect (Sakwa, 2008a, p. 375). Cadier and Light (2015) argue that more than ever, internal factors are the main determinants of Russia's international choices, while Simons (2018) claims that RFP is intrinsically linked to its domestic situation. On the other hand, it is still common to 'treat Russian foreign policy as if domestic influences and considerations were of little relevance' (Lo, 2015, p. 3). This chapter aims to analyse the state of the art in the area of domestic factors and their influence on RFP. The first part describes different actors taking part in RFP decision-making focusing on changes in these processes, which I contend, had impact on Russia's international behaviour. The second part deals with the Russian opposition and argues that its role is not without significance in shaping RFP, as is the case with public opinion, which is discussed in the last part of this chapter

Russian foreign policy decision-making

Foreign policy decision-making processes (also foreign policy decision-making) are often even less transparent than other areas of politics. It is difficult to establish how decisions are made and by whom. As numerous authors emphasise (Mankoff, 2009, Forsberg and Pursiainen 2017), it is even more challenging in the case of Russia where elites are less accountable to the public than in Western-style democracies and where due to many weaknesses of institutions (often more important are clans and factions, e.g. see Kryshtanovskaya and White, 2005; Anon, 2018) foreign policy decision-making processes are informal, personalised and often rely on individuals who act behind the scenes. However, some patterns which potentially influence RFP decision-making may be identified and some links between changes in decision-making circles and foreign policy actions can be traced. Much can be understood from the analysis of available information on key decision-makers and the processes themselves because, as argued by some analysts (e.g. see Lo, 2003, 2015), RFP less than on objective factors depends on configurations and importance of various decision-makers.

Among the most important consequences of the collapse of the Soviet Union for RFP decision-making was the sudden increase in the number of actors shaping or wanting to shape Russia's international actions. While during the Soviet (as well as tsarist) period foreign

policy-making was generally centralised, in the final phase of the existence of the USSR and after its dissolution these processes became scattered between various institutions and more visible to the public (Donaldson et al. 2014). Although the collapse of the powerful Communist Party of the Soviet Union should have increased the significance of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA), this did not happen. Already at the beginning of 1992, Boris Yeltsin subordinated various ministries (among others the MFA and the Ministry of Defence) under the presidency, 'reducing the foreign ministry to not much more than a specialist executive agency' (Sakwa, 2008a, p. 373). In subsequent years, the number of actors dealing with foreign policy increased and the MFA began to be contradicted and ignored by other departments such as the Ministry of Defence (MoD), the Ministry of Atomic Energy and the Presidential Administration (Lo, 2003, p. 21). In general, during the whole Yeltsin era, RFP decision-making was characterized by many inconsistencies and a struggle for influence between various ministries and interest groups. After taking power, Vladimir Putin managed to bring some order and greater central control by balancing different interests (Lo 2003). Although Putin managed to restore order, there have been still many actors influencing foreign policy decision-making in Russia who, according to Mankoff (2009, pp. 56–61), have represented a range of different views and were far from a monolith.

One of the most important effects of changes in the mechanisms of RFP decision-making at the beginning of the century was their personalisation. Putin has further personalised an already strongly personalised system in which not institutions but individuals and various informal networks are of the greatest importance. Lo (2015, p. 36) notes that this model is not limited to the President but is replicated at all levels of power. According to Kryshtanovskaya and White (2005, p. 1066), 'the authority of the central executive is in practice devolved to a series of small and informal groups around the President himself. Putin prefers to work not with formal institutions but with ad hoc groups that are not defined by institutional boundaries'. Marten (2015, pp. 193–194) writes that characteristic for Russian leaders is that they think about politics in personalist instead of organizational or institutional terms and adds that 'decisions are made not within well-defined constitutional bodies or bureaucratic institutions, but behind closed doors by unknown individuals'. As such, the study will focus on the analysis of Russian power circles and changes among Putin's key advisers throughout the examined period.

Actors and institutions in Russian foreign policy decision-making

As Hermann and Hagan (1998, p. 126) note 'state leaders play a pivotal role in balancing international imperatives with those arising from, or embedded in, domestic politics'. Indeed, **President Putin** holds a paramount position in this personalised system and his role seems to be pivotal but analysts differ in the assessment of the degree of his power. Charap (2004, p. 55) notes that 'under the Russian constitution, practically all responsibility for foreign policy is given to the executive, thus severely limiting the influence of other institutional actors' and adds that Putin has more power and fewer constraints in shaping RFP than in determining domestic policies. Forsberg and Haukkala (2018, p. 273) consider Putin as a key actor in RFP towards the European Union and write about his 'extraordinary role as the ultimate leader in Russia'. Lo (2003, 2015) argues that the president decides on the most important matters and says that 'to a very large extent Putin is Russian foreign policy' (Lo, 2003, p. 46). Describing the decision to annex Crimea, Lukyanov (in Myers 2014) states that 'it seems the whole logic […] is almost entirely the product of one particular mind'.

On the other hand, Hale (2019, p. 205) convincingly argues, that Putin 'is clearly the most powerful figure in Russia today, but he cannot just do as he pleases' and as such, 'studying his personality alone will yield only a poor guide to Russia's behaviour', while Galeotti (2019) notes that the most popular misconception about Putin is that 'he runs everything' in Russia. Consequently, Zygar (2017b) and Pavlovsky (2017), the former Kremlin insider, speak about 'collective Putin' and claim that his power is often exaggerated because he is dependent on the bureaucratic system within which he wants to remain popular. Zygar (2017) adds that Putin would like to be in control but this is not possible because the system is too complex. Lo (2003, 2015) writes that we should not overestimate the level of Putin's control and that the President has to rely on others (mainly individuals not institutions) but in his opinion, Putin determines Russia's strategic directions.

As various analysts point to the key role of President Putin, it is worth mentioning some scholarly literature that looks at him more extensively. Although the Russian president has been often presented by Western media as aggressive, nationalist leader, Dyson and Parent's (2018) operational code analysis (which examines leaders' core beliefs) demonstrates that in general, Putin speaks more like a mainstream than a 'rogue' (outside of the boundaries of mainstream thought and action) leader. However, authors point out that a different Putin emerges when he speaks about terrorism, which 'provokes exceptional hostility' from the Russian president (Dyson and Parent, 2018, p. 91). This links to Putin's central drive toward

order and perception of chaos and state weakness as existential threats (Dyson and Parent, 2018, pp. 92–93). A similar account is presented by Lo (2015, p. 16) who writes about Putin's 'visceral fear of instability and what it may mean for the system he has constructed, and for Russia's position in the world'.

During the first period of his presidency, Putin was generally seen as a pragmatic, goal-oriented leader focused on realisation of Russia' national interests (see Charap, 2004; Sakwa, 2008b). However, according to some analysts, Putin significantly changed since his return to power in 2012. Sergunin (2014) writes that Putin transformed from pragmatist to ideologue and Wood argues that the Russian president 'developed an ideology of patriotic conservatism and national glory' (Wood, 2016, p. 121). There are also divergent opinions on whether Putin is a strategist or an opportunist. Mearsheimer considers him 'is a first-class strategist who should be feared and respected by anyone challenging him on foreign policy' (Mearsheimer, 2014a, p. 8). Nevertheless, other analysts are inclined toward the understanding of Putin's actions as resulting from specific circumstances that he tries to take advantage of. For instance, Burns considers Putin as an improviser while Lukyanov notes that 'Putin is good at tactics. He has a vision. But there is no strategy in between' (Lukyanov in Wilson, 2014, p. 185; see also Treisman, 2016; Bukkvoll, 2016, p. 278). Dyson and Parent's analysis also demonstrates that Putin's 'approach is that of an opportunist rather than a strategist' (Dyson and Parent, 2018, p. 84). It indicates that Putin's post-2012 stance might not result from an ideological transformation but rather from a pragmatic reaction to changes in external, and in particular domestic circumstances, that aimed at specific internal benefits arising from the need to extend the support base to the rural, more conservative population (see chapter 7). Indeed, operational code analysis also shows that his worldview has been rather consistent over time (Dyson and Parent, 2018, p. 91). As such, it is important to attempt to trace potential changes which could have taken place in the President's style, attitude and beliefs between the colour revolutions and the 2014 Ukraine crisis and asses their possible impact on RFP behaviour. Consequently, the examination of NRCs used by Putin in the analysed period and potential shifts in their distribution can contribute to the recent debate on the Russian President as it can point to (lack of) changes in his perception of Russia's international duties.

Apart from the presidency, various analyses of institutions dealing with RFP decision-making start with **the Ministry of Foreign Affairs**. Nevertheless, scholars are rather unanimous in the opinion that this body does not play a leading role in defining Moscow's

international agenda. Opinion presented by Andrei Kozyrev, the former minister of foreign affairs is illustrative. In an interview given to the Institute of Modern Russia, Kozyrev said that he believed that the Foreign Ministry and its head, Sergei Lavrov did not define RFP but just implemented 'professional maintenance' (Kozyrev, 2018) and Lavrov himself acknowledged in one of his first statements as Foreign Minister that it was the president who defined RFP, while the MFA implemented it (Lavrov, 2014a). Sakwa goes a step further and writes that in the eyes of some critics the Ministry has 'become little more than a glorified travel agency organising Putin's many trips abroad' (Sakwa, 2008a, p. 374). A more balanced opinion is presented by Lo (2003) who recognises that the MFA lost its significance in comparison with the Soviet period but he disagrees with defining its role as secondary arguing that the Ministry still has a significant influence on RFP decision-making. Mankoff (2009) writes that although theoretically the MFA should play the key role not only in implementing but also in defining RFP, since Putin's presidency it has been rather marginal. Finally, Bukkvoll (2016) cites a report according to which the MFA often is not part of foreign policy decision-making in Russia on strategic level. Overall, analysts tend to agree that from the start of the Putin era the MFA is necessary for implementation of foreign policy but is not responsible for advisory duties related to defining the key concepts and directions of Russia's international activity.

Scholars (Mankoff 2009; Donaldson et al. 2014; Forsberg and Haukkala 2018) also usually agree on the role of Minister Lavrov who has been performing his function since 2004 and is the longest-serving foreign minister of Russia/USSR since Andrei Gromyko. Generally, Lavrov is considered to be a professional, a good diplomat and an extremely competent negotiator who is popular in Russia and prominent abroad. Nevertheless, he is a career diplomat without political connections or strong views on the directions of RFP (Mankoff, 2009) and who does not have too much influence on shaping Russia's international policies. Furthermore, according to Bukkvoll (2016), he did not take part in any of the key decisions during the crisis in Ukraine in 2014. As such, Lavrov is considered to be a good administrator and loyal executor of president's international decisions but does not exert such influence on foreign policy as Kozyrev or Primakov during the Yeltsin era. For this reason, scholars speak about the Kozyrev or the Primakov foreign policy but not about the Lavrov one.

The second institution that is often mentioned in the context of RFP decision-making is **the Ministry of Defence**. The ministry gained considerable influence in the sphere of foreign policy after the fall of the Soviet Union. According to Sakwa (2008a, p. 374), with the creation of the Russian MoD in 1992 the old Soviet patterns of rivalry between the foreign

and defence ministries re-emerged. During the 1990s, the ministry enjoyed a relatively strong position due to the war in Chechnya, situation in the Balkans and its peace-keeping role in the post-Soviet space. However, with the arrival of President Putin, the importance of the MoD began to decline. Sakwa (2008) notes that during Putin and Medvedev presidencies, the ministry has continued to lose its influence on RFP decision-making. Konyshev and Sergunin (2018, pp. 169, 178) agree writing that the ministry's role in foreign policy making is limited but note that the military may influence RFP by shaping the elites' threat perceptions. For the above reasons, the MoD will be largely excluded from the analysis, except for the period when it was headed by Sergei Ivanov, Putin's close ally.

Another institution worth mentioning is **the Security Council of the Russian Federation (SCRF)**. As some analysts suggest (Monaghan 2012; Zygar 2017b), the SCRF is an important body which is sometimes compared to the Soviet Politburo (Kryshtanovskaya and White 2003; Zygar 2017b). This body is composed of 12 permanent members (among others president, prime minister, minister of foreign affairs and minister of defence) and numerous non-permanent members. Since 2008 the post of the Secretary of the SCRF has been held by Nikolai Patrushev who previously was the director of the FSB (The Federal Security Service of the Russian Federation, KGB's successor), where he had replaced Putin and whom the President considers as a close and trusted colleague (Putin et al. 2000). From November 1999 to March 2001 the position of the secretary was held by Sergei Ivanov, who along with Patrushev was mentioned by Putin as one of his three closest colleagues (Putin et al. 2000). Although it had been initially intended as an executive body in foreign and security issues, for a long time the SCRF did not play a significant role in RFP (Mankoff, 2009). However, since Putin became president, the council has grown in importance, at various times taking an active role in foreign policy, especially under Sergei Ivanov (Sakwa, 2008a, p. 374; Forsberg and Haukkala, 2018, p. 274). In 2011 President Medvedev signed an order which grants the SCRF new powers that allow the Council to determine directions of RFP (Giles 2012). According to Monaghan (2012), the SCRF has evolved significantly and in 2012 was in the core of the structure of power, in theory, being able to implement the state's policies.

Finally, **the Presidential Administration** is an executive office of Russia's president whose members are appointed directly by the head of state. The Presidential Administration is, in the words of Trenin and Lo (2005, p. 10), 'the true national government'. It was especially powerful during the Yeltsin era when it was considered as an alternative ministry and maintained its important position in foreign policy decision-making at the beginning of

Putin's presidency, mainly due to keeping in post Yeltsin's advisers, such as: Alexander Voloshin, Sergei Yastrzhembsky and Sergei Prikhodko (Lo 2003). However, as in the case of other ministries, the presidential administration also underwent significant changes at the end of Putin's first term with the departure of, among others, Voloshin (2003) and Yastrzhembsky (2004). Indeed, this research will argue that personal reshuffles within the administration exerted influence on foreign policy making processes and Russia's dominant national role conceptions (NRCs). Apart from Voloshin, the best example is Andrei Illarionov, a former presidential senior economic adviser dealing with the state's external economic agenda. Illarionov left his position in 2005 saying that Russia 'is no longer a democratic country. It is no longer a free country' (Finn, 2005). Overall, as significant shifts in the power circles took place in the examined period, the analysis of Putin's changing group of advisers will be an important part of this research.

Apart from the bodies described above, there are other informal actors like business groups or Russian Orthodox Church that try to influence RFP. Nevertheless, due to the study's theoretical framework which is based on actors who openly use various NRCs (see the next chapter), these groups of influence (as well as informal advisers, who very rarely speak publicly, such as Igor Sechin and Vladislav Surkov) are largely left out of the analysis.

Russian foreign policy decision-making - what else do we know?

The following section presents some available information on foreign policy decision-making processes in Russia, focusing on the individuals responsible for them. The focus on individuals is twofold: first, information on their presence in various positions is publicly available. Second, and more importantly, as it has been already mentioned, the Russian political scene, various institutions and especially foreign policy decision-making processes are based on individuals. In addition, individuals and their personalities 'may be more important for states' foreign policies under certain conditions, such as when bureaucratic, domestic or systemic, contexts are ambiguous, complex, uncertain or dynamic… and when decision making authority is concentrated and restricted to the top leader' (Kaarbo, 2018, p. 3). Lo (2015, p. 36) argues that there are few countries where individuals are more important than in present-day Russia.

In general, analysts (e.g. see Kryshtanovskaya and White 2005) agree that Vladimir Putin and his colleagues in the Kremlin are responsible for the key international decisions. However, today the foreign policy decision-making circle seems to be much smaller than it was ten or fifteen years ago. Lo (2015, p. 8) even refers to the Leninist principle 'fewer is

better' which means more effective and more secure decisions. At the beginning of his presidency Putin was surrounded by influential pro-Western figures in and around his administration (Kudrin, Gref, Illarionov, Chubais). At that time, he relied not only on a larger number of advisers but also more diversified: former KGB colleagues, Petersburg city hall connections as well as former Yeltsin's aides such as Presidential Chief-of-Staff Voloshin, Foreign Minister Igor Ivanov or former Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin (Lo, 2003, pp. 22, 118). However, the majority of these people are no longer members of the President's close circle today. This research will argue that the narrowing group dealing with international issues and its growing homogeneity were one of the most important factors that influenced changes in Russia's NRCs, and consequently, foreign policy behaviour.

The group of ex-Yeltsin's advisers began to crumble first. At the end of 2003 Voloshin was replaced by Dmitry Medvedev and five months later, Ivanov's place was taken by the current Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lavrov. During Putin's second term, his circle of advisers narrowed down to his colleagues from KGB and/or St Petersburg with rare exceptions like Lavrov, a career diplomat. As demonstrated in empirical chapters, at that time more liberal advisers were being replaced by so called 'siloviki' (derived from *silovye struktury* – force structures). Although there are more different factions in the Kremlin which interpenetrate each other, siloviki and liberals have been considered as the two main clans (Kryshtanovskaya and White, 2005). Liberals are generally united by their approach to economy which is definitely more market friendly than that of siloviki. The name 'siloviki' is often, but not always, used for former members of the armed forces or security services. However, as Bremmer and Charap (2007) note, what mainly connects siloviki is their worldview. In general, they support a highly centralised state with a strong army and security apparatus; they prefer law and order over democracy and civil society; they are against foreign investments in the sector of natural resources and for strong state interventionism in the economy, and they often endorse nationalistic views. In foreign policy, siloviki promote the restoration of Russia's greatness and international status, consider the West, especially the USA and NATO, as an existential threat and support the strongest possible reintegration of post-Soviet states with Russia (Bremmer and Charap, 2007, pp. 88–89). Sergei Ivanov (one of Putin's closest allies, former Secretary of the SCRF, Minister of Defence, deputy Prime Minister and Head of the Presidential Administration) was considered as a leader of this group for a long time. Ivanov is generally known for his hawkish views, exemplified by his position during the Ukraine crisis, lobbying for intervention in Syria (the Economist, 2016)

and by his statement from the time he was the defence minister when he said that Russia did not rule out a pre-emptive military strike anywhere in the world if the interests of Russia demanded it (BBC, 2003). The group also includes other powerful figures, such as Patrushev and Igor Sechin, Rosneft chairman and for many years deputy head of the Presidential Administration and deputy Prime Minister (see Kryshtanovskaya and White, 2005; Bremmer and Charap, 2007). Sechin, as well as Vladislav Surkov in the liberal faction, have been considered as important advisers whose opinions matter. However, as they operate behind the scenes and occasionally speak publicly, it is very difficult to know their views and include them in any analysis.

Consequently, Putin's third term and especially the period close to the Euromaidan revolution, led to another narrowing in the group of advisers responsible for foreign policy decision-making (see Zygar 2016a). According to analysts cited by Myers (2014), these cuts are a result of Putin's increasing conservatism since mass protests in 2011/12 and criticism from the West of Russia's record on political and human rights. Similar opinion about the narrowing of foreign policy decision-making circle to those who share Putin's ideas is presented by Galeotti and Bowen (2014) who write that at the beginning of his presidency Putin used to listen to a range of advisers with different views, from liberal economist Aleksei Kudrin to 'political fixer' Surkov, who were not afraid to present him their opinions. Forsberg and Pursiainen (2017, p. 227) agree that the group responsible for RFP has narrowed and write that Putin's 'circle of allies and advisers has shrunk to those who only share his exact ideas'. They compare this situation to the beginning of Putin's presidency when he 'listened to a range of opinions' and used to be the 'arbiter brokering consensus among various clans and interests' (Forsberg and Pursiainen, 2017, p. 227). As a consequence, these authors write, 'sober technocrats' like Lavrov or Shoigu played a marginal role (or none) in the decision-making process over the future of the Crimean Peninsula. However, apart from the above sources, the issue of changes among Putin's advisers, especially in the long run and their impact on foreign policy is often neglected in the literature on RFP. As such, the study aims to focus on shifts among the president's advisers throughout the analysed period looking at the most important people who left and joined the power circles in order to examine the impact of these changes (along with more structural factors) on RFP behaviour.

Consequently, while analysing participants of decision-making processes it is important to draw attention to their background and relations with the President. For instance, Putin's most trusted advisers, such as Ivanov, Patrushev and Alexander Bortnikov

(FSB director) all are former members of KGB and in Myers's (2014) words 'colleagues of colleagues of Mr. Putin's when he served in the organization in Leningrad, now St. Petersburg, during the 1970s and '80s'. Such a small and homogeneous circle of advisers may lead to group-think in RFP decision-making processes, which is characterised by seeking consensus at the expense of exploring a variety of alternatives. The consequences of group-think may include omissions in surveying objectives, processing information in a biased manner and failing to examine the costs and risks of the preferred choice (Schafer and Crichlow, 2010, pp. 63–64). Homogeneity in views and opinions may result, among others, from similar background of decision-makers (Sunstein, 2003, p. 143). Some Russia analysts (Kuchins, 2014; Bukkvoll, 2016) point to the group-think argument and this study will strive to examine whether changes in the power circles resulted in increasingly homogenous opinions and if so, to what extent did they determine RFP behaviour.

Regardless of Putin's aides' views, which are difficult to verify, a narrow circle of advisers can also lead to incomplete information. This argument is presented by Marten (2015, p. 193) who, citing Weeks (2014), writes that this is a common problem for personalist dictatorships in which no one wants to provide bad news or information which may challenge leader's views or choices. She notes that this may be the cause of some surprising Russian decisions. Furthermore, from Putin's interview (Crimea Way Back Home 2015) it seems that the decision about the annexation was taken by the President himself. Venediktov (2015) agrees with such an interpretation and notes that Putin made the decision to take Crimea by force on his own. This information (regardless of whether true or not) leads to a wider question about the role of the President himself in RFP decision-making processes. According to Pavlovsky (2015, 2017), since his third presidential term Putin has started to act in a different way and has begun to look for enemies in Russia. He also less often than at the beginning takes part in discussions with advisers and tends to put himself above the structure of decision-making. Instead of being the arbiter among various clans and interest groups his style has become increasingly autocratic (Galeotti and Bowen 2014). Consequently, analysts (Sergunin, 2014; Wood, 2016; Zygar, 2018a) note that Putin turned from pragmatist to ideologue who is now guided by patriotic conservatism and national glory. On the other hand, Putin's operational code analysis shows rather consistent world views over time (Dyson and Parent, 2018). Other analysts rather than speaking about general changes in Putin's attitude to decision making processes, point to different areas of RFP suggesting that the President reserves these most important for himself. Zygar (2016a) argues that the Russian

President has for a long time tried to deal with the affairs of Ukraine on his own, while Forsberg and Haukkala (2018, p. 273) write that Putin has been responsible for the direction of RFP towards the EU. As demonstrated above, there are many contradicting opinions in the literature regarding the Russian President and his alleged change. As such, analysing Putin's statements and NRC's used by him, the study will aim to examine whether due to these changes RFP became more ideologically driven, or it is just the President's rhetoric that changed and Russia's international behaviour remained rather pragmatic.

To sum up, the alterations in the number and structure of leaders' advisers may lead to changes in a state's decision-making processes and therefore to changes in foreign policy behaviour. Such modifications may be even more consequential for countries like Russia where the individuals often matter more than institutions. More than a decade ago, Lo wrote about Putin's reliance on trusted friends, like Kudrin or Sergei Ivanov, but also about different groups to which Putin resorts in foreign policy issues (Lo, 2003, pp. 44–47). Furthermore, he argued that retention of key figures from the Yeltsin administration – Voloshin, Yastrzhembsky, Igor Ivanov and Anatoly Kvashnin – demonstrates Putin's awareness that his Petersburg FSB/mayor's office circle of advisers was too narrow to conduct effective policy (Lo, 2003, p. 47). However, currently among Putin's advisers not only former Yeltsin's aides are missing but also liberals like Kudrin, who for eleven years (2000 – 2011) served as the finance minister. In addition, at the beginning of his presidency when economic issues were of paramount importance for RFP, Putin was surrounded by other advisers broadly considered as liberals, such as liberal reformer German Gref. This research will aim to demonstrate that with the departure of these people (Illarionov 2005, Gref 2007, Kudrin 2011) one can notice the decreasing importance of economic issues in RFP and as a consequence, more general changes such as less emphasis on cooperation with the West. Last but not least, a narrowed circle of advisers may lead to the incomplete information but also, due to the exclusion of some liberal and pro-western advisers, opinions received by the President may be skewed. As such, I will argue that the changes described above were one of the key factors behind RFP becoming more assertive over the years, culminating with the annexation of Crimea in 2014. Role theory will enable me to show how these shifts resulted in different perceptions of Russia's international duties and responsibilities, which in turn led to changes in foreign policy behaviour. The following parts of the chapter reflect on the role of other actors in shaping RFP. The first section deals with Russian opposition, while the second with public opinion.

Opposition in Russia

Even if Russian elections are not entirely free or fair (for instance due to the regime's control of the media and frequent changes in the electoral rules), neither are they completely meaningless (see Mankoff, 2009, p. 59). The results of elections, especially federal and regional, at least to a certain degree, can be considered as reflecting popular will. Consequently, what opposition politicians say is not without significance, therefore, this research argues that analysis of factors influencing RFP should not neglect the Russian opposition and potential contestation processes.

The opposition in Russia can be divided between the parliamentary one and different parties and organisations that act outside of the Russian Duma. According to Gel'man (2015, p. 178), the first group (also called 'systemic' or 'semi-opposition') may oppose some policies but do not seek a general regime change while the second one (also 'non-systemic' or 'principal' opposition) is designed to change the regime in power. The former consists of three parliamentary parties: the Communist Party of the Russian Federation (CPRF), Liberal Democratic Party of Russia (LDPR) and A Just Russia. The latter group is more diverse and therefore more difficult to describe. In general, it consists of non-parliamentary political parties (e.g. PARNAS, Yabloko), anti-government groups (The Other Russia coalition) as well as various NGOs and organisations. Their political views range from left-wing nationalists (The Other Russia party) to Russian liberals.

Analysing Russia's political scene, one should be aware that almost twenty years after the collapse of the Soviet Union and the fall of communism, as Sakwa (2012) notes, it is still difficult to apply the Western political spectrum to Russian politics. Sakwa provides examples of the CPRF and the LDPR writing that 'the CPRF espouses right-wing nationalist values while propounding a left-wing agenda of social justice, limited markets, and anti-globalism. The LDPR advances a radical patriotic agenda based on neo-imperial representations of Russian greatness' (Sakwa, 2012, p. 314). Furthermore, it is important to note that the opposition politics in Russia had sharply declined in the mid-2000s (Gel'man, 2015). However, analysing huge protests in 2011-12 which gathered hundreds of thousands of demonstrators, Gel'man (2015, p. 177) argues that almost ten years later Russian political scene looked different and 'the Russian opposition was able to multiply its ranks'.

Parliamentary opposition

The parliamentary opposition consists of parties which are part of the Russian Duma and despite presenting themselves as opposition, take part in legislative processes. Gel'man (2015, p. 178) describes them as 'fellow travellers and junior partners of authoritarian regimes' but does not exclude their disloyalty to the authorities. Since the 2003 elections there have been three such parties in the Russian parliament: the Liberal Democratic Party, the Communist Party and A Just Russia, which in 2007 replaced its predecessor Rodina. Although in theory the Communist Party is situated on the far-left of political spectrum while Zhirinovsky's Liberal Democratic Party is considered as nationalist far-right party, actually both often support the authorities 'opposing more in rhetoric than in reality and seemingly complicit in an acceptance that the ruling regime retains its position' (Bacon, 2017, p. 42).

On the other hand, according to Laruelle (2009), the CPRF and LDPR despite being part of the establishment, often present themselves as outsiders and leaders of social protest trying to differentiate themselves from the authorities. Furthermore, it is important to remember that voting for these parties still demonstrates some genuine support and in Bacon's words (2017, p. 42) 'does allow voters to express some dissatisfaction with the ruling regime'. The relative importance of the two parties can be seen by looking at the electoral maps created by Alexander Kireev. Investigating the results of different elections, e.g. parliamentary ones in 2016 (Kireev 2016), one can notice that usually runners up were members of one of these two parties. Furthermore, in 2018 Gubernatorial elections in Russia candidates representing systemic opposition won in three out of twenty-two federal subjects in Russia. Describing results of these elections Ivanko (2018) said that the party of power, United Russia, suffered a rare setback. The below section continues with brief descriptions of these three opposition parties.

The Communist Party of the Russian Federation

Analysing opposition parties in Russia, one should start with the CPRF. Until the creation of United Russia, it was the biggest party in the country and the only real mass party. As Sakwa (2008a, p. 145) writes, the CPRF having half a million members until 2003 doubled the membership of all other parties taken together. According to March (2012a, p. 136), the CPRF is one of the few 'so called opposition parties to criticise Putin and central executive powers directly'. However, he adds that the CPRF power is incomparably lower than in the 1990s with the party being unable to lead the opposition protest.

Laruelle (2009) points to some assets that the CPRF still possesses especially in comparison with other opposition parties in Russia. Firstly, apart from United Russia, the Communist Party is the only one having a countrywide structure inherited from its powerful predecessor, the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. However, it is important to note that 'embracing Russian nationalism and defending the rights of the Russian Orthodox Church' the party has departed from the ideology of its powerful predecessor (Reuter, 2019, p. 49). Secondly, the CPRF has a press network which includes such titles as Pravda (The Truth) and Sovetskaia Rossia (Soviet Russia) (see Laruelle 2009, p. 89). Furthermore, Laruelle writes about the Kremlin's various efforts to weaken the CPRF, such as negative media coverage or the attempts to split its electorate which may indicate that the CPRF is still considered the main political rival. Last but not least, the CPRF still has its devoted voters and activists, mainly among pensioners, the working class and in general, those whose position deteriorated during the transition from communism (Reuter, 2019, p. 50).

As for the party's foreign policy agenda, the CPRF is for the creation of a Slavic Union with voluntary integration of other former Soviet republics and speaks about the restoration of Russian might (Zyuganov 1996, Sputnik, 2007). For instance, Zyuganov, the CPRF long-time leader, enthusiastically supported the annexation of Crimea and called for more decisive actions in the Donbass region (Zyuganov, 2014a). In addition, White and Feklyunina (2014) point to the party's hostile attitude toward the West. Indeed, Zyuganov has many times presented anti-Western position, e.g. in his 2015 letter saying that the 'USA and the European Union increasingly challenge Russian Federation's right to state sovereignty' and that a 'grave crisis in Russia has been designed in the CIA's laboratories' (Zyuganov, 2015). Consequently, the analysis of Zyuganov's statements will demonstrate whether these views are reflected in NRCs used by him and whether the Russian leadership pays attention to these roles. All in all, although weaker than in the 1990s and currently without a chance to win the parliamentary elections, the CPRF is still able to attract some voters, especially the poorer ones. Furthermore, it achieves relatively (for the Russian political system) good results in regional elections, as in 2018. Finally, the CPRF remains the largest opposition party in Russia (Reuter, 2019, p. 49) and 'the only one with even semi-independent status' (March, 2012a, p. 137). These facts combined with the largely anti-Western foreign policy agenda that is strongly focused on rebuilding Russia's influence in the post-Soviet space, makes the CPRF an important object of analysis.

The Liberal Democratic Party of Russia

The Liberal Democratic Party of Russia (LDPR) is the second biggest party among the systemic opposition. In the West the LDPR is mainly known for its controversial leader, Vladimir Zhirinovsky. At the beginning of the 1990s the party gained considerable popularity and won the popular vote in 1993 proclaiming nationalist and expansionist slogans. However, the LDPR quickly lost its popularity and as Sakwa (2008a, p. 147) writes, became a supporter of the government in the Duma, a situation which continued after Putin took power.

Although often compared to or mentioned along with the Communist Party, according to Laruelle, 'the LDPR is distinguished from the CPRF by its almost unconditional support for the political establishment' (Laruelle, 2009, p. 98). That said, she adds that the LDPR demonstrates some discernible, doctrinal elements advocating imperialist and xenophobic policies. The party's ideology is ethnic nationalist and in foreign policy issues it presents hard anti-Western positions (Reuter, 2019, p. 47). Furthermore, Zhirinovsky often presents himself as a proponent of the Russian Empire, restoration of the mighty armed forces and return to the arms race (Laruelle, 2009, p. 99). Being a staunch critic of the West, Zhirinovsky accused it, among others, of organising the colour revolutions and supported the creation of a military bloc in the post-Soviet space in answer to NATO's enlargement to the East. These visions resonate with often anti-western views of the Russian society. In addition, Zhirinovsky often speaks about the post-Soviet space. For instance, he many times advocated the inclusion of former Soviet republics to the Russian Federation and promised to restore Russia's borders to those from 1985 (Zhirinovsky 2016), while during the Ukraine crisis in 2014 proposed the split of this country (Kelly, 2014). Last but not least, writing about Zhirinovsky and Russian nationalists more generally, it is important to note that they are not part of any decision-making structures (Laruelle 2019, p. 78), however, being constantly represented in the Duma and having access to the Russian media (as in Zhirinovsky's case), these politicians, and their ideas, have the opportunity to reach Russian society. Indeed, Russians constantly consider Zhirinovsky one of the most trusted politicians in the country (e.g. see Levada, 2014b, 2014a). As such, the analysis of Zhirinovsky's and other nationalists' statements will demonstrate whether their NRCs gain the public support, whether they differ from roles advocated by Russian leaders, and if yes, what is the leadership attitude to them.

A Just Russia (and its predecessor Rodina)

Rodina was created in August 2003 and there have been many voices saying that the party was 'the Kremlin's invention'. This position is presented, among others, by Sakwa (2008) who

claims that Rodina was a classic 'project party', founded to take votes away from the CPRF. However, after the benefits reform of 2005 which replaced subsidies and benefits with cash payments and which was greeted by waves of protests, the situation became more complicated as the reform set Rodina on a collision course with the authorities (Laruelle, 2009, p. 105). Furthermore, Dmitry Rogozin, one of Rodina leaders, together with the National Bolshevik leader Eduard Limonov defended a 'popular referendum' initiative that would have validated the accession of new subjects to the Russian Federation, again opposing the Kremlin. This postulate was in line with Rodina's foreign policy agenda which spoke about the rebuilding of Russia's position in the post-Soviet space through the creation of an entity encompassing present-day Russia, Belarus and Kazakhstan, as well as the pro-Russian secessionist regions of Transnistria, Abkhazia and South Ossetia. Furthermore, Rodina took part 'in the various debates on foreign policy that shook the Duma, particularly on relations with CIS countries' (Laruelle, 2009, p. 113).

After these events, with Rodina becoming more oppositional and independent, it was barred from elections in 2005 and instead a new party was formed at the Kremlin's initiative, A Just Russia (Bigg, 2006; Golosov, 2014; Reuter, 2019). The party's leader, Sergei Mironov, a long-time Putin ally who is close to the 'Petersburg clan', described A Just Russia as a new 'leftist political force' and a 'hard opposition' (Bigg, 2006; Reuter, 2019, p. 48). However, in 2011/12 during the biggest anti-Kremlin protests since the collapse of the USSR, Mironov distanced himself from protesters and non-systemic opposition forces. A Just Russia's position in relation to post-Soviet space is well illustrated by Mironov's statements. During the Five-Day War in Georgia and the Euromaidan revolution, he presented a position close to Russian nationalists supporting intervention in Georgia and claiming that Ukraine could not exist as a unitary state (Mironov in Digol, 2009, p. 114; Mironov, 2014). In addition, the party is considered being less pro-market and more anti-Western than United Russia (see Reuter, 2019, p. 48). Consequently, with all parties in the Duma being more or less explicitly anti-Western, the most moderated attitude toward the West is presented by the party of power – United Russia. Indeed, since the 2003 parliamentary elections when liberal parties did not cross the threshold, United Russia can be considered as the most pro-market and least anti-Western party in the Russian parliament and has been supported by some liberal voters and politicians (see Reuter, 2019, p. 50).

Non-parliamentary opposition

Non-parliamentary opposition groups, contrary to opposition parties described above, position themselves as explicit rivals to the regime. For many years, Russian non-systemic opposition was rather weak and gained more attention in the West than in Russia. That said, scholars (e.g. see Gel'man 2015) point out that non-parliamentary opposition became stronger in the 2010s comparing to the 2000s. Gel'man (2015) provides three main reasons for that: the effects of generational change, expanding political opportunities (especially during Medvedev's presidency) and the shift to a populist strategy. Although he argues that after the protests in 2011 the opposition became louder and the Kremlin was forced to change its strategy from ignorance to intimidation, the non-parliamentary opposition in Russia is still divided by internal contradictions. Apart from the Kremlin's strategies to undermine it, this inability to create a common agenda seems to be its main weakness. Despite these deep divisions, there is a figure - Aleksei Navalny - around whom various opposition forces have been repeatedly mobilised. Navalny is a representative of the new generation, which reached maturity after the fall of the Soviet Union or in the final phase of its existence. Therefore, as Bacon (2017, p. 38) writes, he 'has the sort of appeal that can attract young post-Soviet supporters'.

Navalny poses a threat (to a certain extent) to the regime due to some factors which differentiate him from other oppositionists in Russia and his rise was indicative of the increasing troubles facing the Russian authorities (see Gel'man, 2015, p. 185). Firstly, as already mentioned, he is relatively young and therefore has a potential which can attract younger generations. Secondly, he became to be known as an anti-corruption campaigner and as Bacon (2017, p. 38) writes, 'if there is any topic on which the Putin regime is vulnerable to otherwise supportive Russian citizens, it is corruption '. It was Navalny who called United Russia 'the party of crooks and thieves', the phrase which later has become famous, has resonated with many people and has been on placards during demonstrations in Russian cities. Furthermore, as noted by Bacon (2017, p. 74), Navalny's focus on corruption distinguishes him from other non-systemic oppositionists who concentrate on more abstract ideas like Russian liberals' emphasis on democracy and human rights. Last but by no means least, Navalny is dangerous to the Kremlin because of his national populist stance which he directs against authorities (Lassila, 2016). He has also proved to be able to mobilise the crowds, quite recently anti-corruption demonstrations after producing a documentary film about Medvedev's corruption. Navalny's popularity and the fact that he poses a certain

threat to the regime was demonstrated by barring him from presidential election in 2018 after the success in the Moscow mayoral election of 2013 when he unexpectedly had won the support of over 27% of voters.

Apart from Navalny, who gained popularity in the 2010s, the analysis also includes long-time liberal, pro-democratic figures, such as Boris Nemtsov and Grigory Yavlinsky. Nemtsov had been deputy Prime Minister during the Yeltsin's era and went into opposition in the mid-2000s. Since then he was an increasingly harsh critic of the authorities. Nemtsov supported the Orange Revolution and Ukraine's pro-Western turn and opposed the annexation of Crimea. He was shot in February 2015 in still unclear circumstances. Yavlinsky has been a founder and long-time leader of the Russian United Democratic Party 'Yabloko', which was relatively popular in the 1990s but since then has been getting worse results with almost every election. Nevertheless, Yabloko is 'the only political democratic force noticeable on a scale of a whole country' (Kolesnikov, 2016) and Yavlinsky still seems to be a respected politician in circles of the liberal opposition. Russian liberals are generally for pro-market and pro-democracy reforms and present pro-Western attitudes (Reuter, 2019, p. 50). Indeed, their foreign policy agenda is anti-imperialistic, they often speak against Russia's excessive engagement in the post-Soviet space and say that rather than acting against the West, Russia should return to integration and partnership with it. As such their position on some issues differs from that presented by Navalny, who often uses more nationalist rhetoric and, for example, expressed an ambiguous position on the annexation of Crimea (see more in the chapter on the Ukraine crisis). Consequently, the analysis will show whether NRCs presented by non-parliamentary opposition reflect these attitudes, how far these roles differ from those presented by Russian leaders and the parliamentary opposition and whether these conceptions have any public appeal and influence on dominant NRCs among the leadership.

Opposition and Russian foreign policy: conclusions

To sum up, although the parliamentary opposition is not completely independent and the non-parliamentary groups are dispersed and therefore weak, several factors described above indicate that it is worth taking these entities into account in the analysis of RFP to ascertain whether they contested the NRCs and actions of the authorities and to see how their propositions shaped the foreign policy debate in the country. In addition, such an analysis can demonstrate how their NRCs resonated with the public and whether and in what circumstances the regime referred to them and more generally to various ideas advocated by the opposition. Indeed, Allison (2014), recalling Zhirinovsky's 2014 proposition to expand

Russian borders and the regime's quick disavowal of it, writes that 'Putin has to be wary that his freedom of manoeuvre is not curtailed by the revisionist political momentum he has unleashed' (Allison, 2014, p. 1288). Allison admits that these kind of statement may be useful for the regime as they position Putin in the centre of the domestic debate but argues that Putin must be aware of consequences of this dangerous irredentist narration (Allison, 2014, p. 1289). These arguments seem to be particularly valid because Zhirinovsky and Zyuganov, the leaders of the two biggest opposition parties, both speak about unjust actions of the West and propose to increase Russia's power, slogans that resonate with a large part of the society (see sections on vertical contestation in empirical chapters).

Consequently, the parliamentary opposition may serve the regime to demonstrate the existence of a multiparty system in Russia. Nevertheless, these opposition parties still matter because as Bacon argues, 'their programmes do correspond to the political positions of nearly a third of Russia's voters, their participation in electoral campaigns allows policy alternatives to be expressed, they fill almost a quarter of parliamentary seats and 8 per cent of constituencies have a representative who is not a member of Putin's United Russia party' (Bacon, 2017, p. 43). As for the liberal opposition, although it is largely marginalised, liberal views had some public appeal in the first half of the 2000s (that is during the colour revolutions) and had some significance in the context of Russia's rapprochement with the West, while recently pro-democratic forces have shown a certain potential to mobilise people, like in 2017-18 anti-corruption protests and 2019 demonstrations caused by the situation with the 2019 Moscow City Duma elections. Overall, Russian opposition is mainly taken into account by analysts writing about the state's internal situation and it is rarely included in studies dealing with RFP. Nevertheless, I argue that for the reasons presented above and further developed in empirical chapters, its inclusion in the analysis may help to highlight different dynamics shaping Russia's international behaviour.

Public Opinion

In 2009 Jeffrey Mankoff wrote that 'the Russian public tends to be less interested in the Great Power ambitions of its leaders and more interested in the quotidian details of everyday life' (Mankoff, 2009, p. 60). He explained it saying that Russians seem to appreciate good economic situation and the fact that their country has become 'more prominent and respected around the world' (Mankoff, 2009, p. 60). However, in March 2014, just before the Russian annexation of Crimea, more Russians preferred to see their country as a great power

that is respected and feared by other countries (48%) than to live in a country with a high standard of living, albeit one which is not among the most powerful states in the world (47%) (Levada, 2014c). Interestingly, eleven years earlier, in December 2003, the opinions were reversed. Answering the same question 54% of Russians preferred to see Russia as a prosperous country which, however, is not one of the most powerful in the world, while 43% as a great power that other countries respect and fear (Levada 2014). Furthermore, in November 2005, a year after the Orange Revolution in Ukraine, this gap was even greater. 62% preferred to see Russia as a prosperous country and only 36% as a great power (Levada 2014).

Consequently, Bacon writes that in 2004 in the Levada's poll ratings assessing the achievements of President Putin, economic development and living standards were consistently the most popular responses (Bacon, 2017, p. 74). By contrast, ten years later, Russians were more concerned about the country's international status and military power rather than economic performance of their country (Bacon, 2017, p. 74). Why were the opinions of Russians so changeable? Did they have any influence on the decisions taken by the Kremlin in the international arena? Did the public support for different NRCs change over time? Speaking more broadly, does Russian public opinion matter in foreign policy decision-making processes?

These questions are relevant because new literature on non-democratic regimes (e.g. Weeks, 2008) indicates that their leaders are not necessarily less vulnerable than democratic ones and can be held accountable domestically. As such, public opinion in (semi-) authoritarian regimes can exert constraints through elections or the threat of revolt, which is arguably the main way in which it can limit autocratic leaders on domestic and foreign policies (Weeks and Crunkilton 2016). Indeed, some research shows that public revolts are representing a growing threat to autocratic regimes (Kendall-Taylor and Frantz, 2014).

Analysts do not agree on the role of the public in shaping RFP. Some scholars (Abarinov 1995, Lo 2002, 2015) argue that despite the end of the USSR not only participation but also the interest of public opinion in RFP is limited mainly due to many problems that affect people more personally, especially economic ones. Elaborating on the role of public opinion in RFP, Lo (2003) writes that it is rather marginal. According to him, the attitude of the public to Russia's international affairs is similar to that which was common during the Soviet Union and the Yeltsin era, that is people have neither the interest nor the means to participate in these issues (Lo, 2003, p. 42). In support of the argument about the low significance of public

opinion for RFP decision-making, he provides an example of the rise of anti-Western sentiments at the beginning of the 2000s and Putin's consistent policy of rapprochement with the West despite this general public mood (Lo, 2002, p. 27). Analysing the public's disengagement, it is important to examine the potential deeper reasons for the lack of public interest in Russia's international affairs despite the improving economic situation and disappearance of some of the more pressing concerns comparing to the 1990s. Lo (2002) argues that due to the absence of grassroots organizations, public opinion does not have channels through which it could express its views and preferences on foreign policy issues. Donaldson and colleagues (2014, p. 146) provide a similar argument writing that 'the channels through which public attitudes are transmitted into the political process are in their infancy'. Furthermore, Russian public opinion does not think that it has any influence on Russian politics (Trudolyubov 2016) and it might seem that there is general expectation and support for the conduct of international affairs by the authorities, according to their views and in the way they consider to be right.

On the other hand, scholars claim that although Russia is not fully democratic, public opinion still matters for RFP (Mankoff 2009, Bacon 2017). These analysts note that the Kremlin does not disregard what people think but on the contrary, it monitors the views of the public and tries to influence them, e.g. through state-controlled media (Bacon, 2017, p. 66; March, 2018, p. 89). Indeed, as March points out 'public discourse is far from irrelevant in policy making. Certainly, the Kremlin is known to be an assiduous analyst of public opinion' (March, 2012b, p. 19). Bacon concludes that for Russian political system and for the authorities, the public 'is by no means all; but it still matters' (2017, p. 67). According to Donaldson and colleagues (2014, p. 146), currently Russian decision-makers pay more attention than ever before to public opinion on international issues.

Zygar (2016b) goes a step further and claims that President Putin cares about staying popular and really cares about being supported by population. He argues that after the end of the social contract of the 2000s, in which Russian society exchanged political freedoms for economic prosperity, now Russians agree to give some wealth in exchange for the feeling of national pride, that is something Russians were missing after the collapse of the Soviet Union and in the 1990s. Zygar (2018) explains that Putin's electoral base is working class, people who can embrace traditional values and want Russia to be great again. Simons (2018) also points to national pride and sense of patriotism among the population, feelings which have increased due to rebuilding of Russia's position in the world. In addition, he writes about the

connections between Russia's foreign and domestic policy and states that RFP shapes perceptions of public opinion (Simons, 2018, p. 206). Simon's argument is important for the understanding of the public's role in RFP decision making because it suggests the existence of a kind of dialectical mechanism in which RFP shapes population's perceptions which then influence the public's expectations towards the state's NRCs and foreign policy behaviour.

As such, if the public's perceptions of international affairs matter to the authorities, then public opinion may act as a constraint or a push on the enactment of dominant NRCs and RFP decisions. Consequently, this indicates the importance of consensus over foreign policy directions. Indeed, Mankoff (2009) claims that despite the fact that elections in Russia are not free and fair, in order to establish and maintain public consent, there needs to be a certain level of agreement between the public's attitudes and the authorities and their policies. Furthermore, writing that it is the Kremlin who is responsible for foreign policy making, he argues that the range of policy options that the authorities can adopt is limited by public opinion. Therefore, despite authoritarian tendencies in Russia, foreign policy decision-makers rely on the acquiescence of public opinion, especially in the areas which are popular and close to the society, such as Russia's relations with the post-Soviet states (Trenin, 2006; Mankoff, 2009, p. 59).

Allison points to another factor which shows how foreign policy in Russia is intertwined with public opinion. He argues that the Kremlin's justifications for the use of force and the annexation of Crimea have been used to mobilize and consolidate Russian domestic opinion around Putin's leadership (Allison, 2014, p. 1259). The need for consolidation was related to Putin's approval ratings which, according to Levada's opinion poll (Gutterman, 2013), in December 2013 was at the lowest level since June 2000. Furthermore, Allison writes that Putin used 'images of NATO forces in "historically Russian" Crimea' (Allison, 2014, p. 1273) to appeal to Russian public opinion. Last but not least, he claims that the Kremlin's narrative about the protection of Russians and Russian speaking-minorities was used in order to convince the public to aggressive policies towards Ukraine (Allison, 2014, p. 1282). Arguments presented by Allison indicate that the Kremlin reckons with the Russian public not only in domestic but also in international matters.

All in all, the examination of the existing literature indicates that public opinion does not drive RFP but still matters for processes shaping it and may act as an important constraint on the range of choices in terms of its directions and decisions. Further research is needed to determine the public's influence on these processes and circumstances when it grows or

decreases and the study aims to contribute to filling this gap. In addition, this research seeks to answer whether due to the nature of Russia's political system the public is less important in shaping foreign policy than in democratic states or these processes are not that different. Consequently, it will demonstrate whether public opinion in Russia, and in (semi-) authoritarian states more generally, contests NRCs advocated by the leadership. The issue of role contestation by the public is discussed in the following chapter that presents the theoretical framework of the research and different approaches to the analysis of RFP.

2. Different approaches to the analysis of Russian foreign policy and theoretical framework of the research

The previous chapter spoke about various domestic aspects of foreign policy-making in Russia, while this one examines how Russian foreign policy (RFP) is generally analysed and presented by scholars of international relations. The first part of this chapter describes the current debate on RFP and evaluates strengths and weaknesses of three main approaches: geopolitical, domestic and ideational. It also presents division on offensive and defensive explanations which has been common in the contemporary literature on RFP. I argue that current approaches concentrating on one level of analysis do not pay enough attention to the interactions of different factors and leave much unexplained. As such, a multi-level approach, which focuses on perceptions and emphasises the nexus of internal and external factors, is needed. Consequently, the second section of this chapter describes the theoretical framework of the research. First, I present role theory and the notion of national role conception (NRC). In the second part, I introduce issues of role change and domestic role contestation that are crucial for this research.

Current approaches to Russian foreign policy and their limitations

Russian foreign policy has provoked a heated debate for several decades, if not centuries, and it intensified in recent years. Western experts (Lucas, 2008; Mearsheimer, 2014a; Sakwa, 2015) argue over its directions as well as the motives and factors shaping it. There are binary, contradictory narratives presented by Russian and Western analysts. Although RFP has been broadly analysed, current approaches leave much unexplained. In general, one can distinguish three main types of explanations: geopolitical, domestic and ideational which are presented in the following sections.

Geopolitical explanations

Geopolitical approaches are closely linked to realist theory of international relations (IR). They point to the international structure, actions taken by Western countries and external threats which these actions allegedly pose to Russia. These accounts explain Russia's assertive foreign policy as a natural response to actions taken by the West, such as the US policy of democracy promotion (Mearsheimer, 2014a; Sakwa, 2015) in post-Soviet and Arab countries, the NATO enlargement or interventions in Kosovo and Iraq, seen by Moscow as the main destabilizing force in the world (Lukyanov, 2014). Indeed, as Mearsheimer

(Mearsheimer, 2014a, pp. 5–6) explains, 'Washington may not like Moscow's position, but it should understand the logic behind it. This is Geopolitics 101: great powers are always sensitive to potential threats near their home territory'. Menon and Rumer (2015) present arguments often put forward by Russian leaders, especially since the Five-Day War, but generally take a more balanced stance. They explain that problems in Russia's relations with the West and post-Soviet states result from the fact that 'the entire post-Cold War European political and security architecture was built on the foundation of two institutions - the European Union and NATO - which did not include Russia' (Menon and Rumer, 2015, p. 162).

Consequently, according to geopolitical considerations RFP actions can be understood as an attempt to rebuild the country's international position, regain influence in the post-Soviet space and hold strategic buffer zones by preventing former Soviet republics from joining NATO and the EU (Trenin, 2014). Gotz (2015) and Lukyanov (2014) writing about Crimea's annexation point to geopolitical motivations such as Ukraine's strategic importance to Russia and the significance of the Black Sea Fleet based in Sevastopol. Dragneva and Wolczuk (2015) mention the EU's Eastern Partnership Programme and the perspective of the Association Agreement between the EU and Ukraine as factors which changed Moscow's attitude and increased Russia's concerns. The last factor is especially important in the context of Russian plans to create the Eurasian Economic Union, in which Ukraine was supposed to be one of the most important members.

Geopolitical accounts may correctly explain Russia's goal of holding influence in the post-Soviet space, but they struggle with explaining specific decisions made by Russia, for example, why it annexed Crimea in March 2014 (see Charap and Welt, 2015). Consequently, they do not answer why although perceiving NATO expansion as a threat, Russia restrained from military intervention for almost ten years between NATO enlargements in 1999 (and 2004) and the invasion of Georgia. Indeed, realists (e.g. see Mearsheimer, 2016) claim that NATO's enlargement plans were not only behind the annexation of Crimea but also led to Russia's 2008 intervention in Georgia. However, Andrei Piontkovsky, Russian political analyst, wrote about such fears already in the context of colour revolutions explaining that 'all politicians, including Putin, are obsessed with the idea that the West is encircling Russia, taking away the near abroad from Russia' (Piontkovsky in Herd, 2005). Nevertheless, as described in more detail in the following chapters, Russia did not decide for any aggressive steps in reaction to the colour revolutions in Georgia and Ukraine.

Second, geopolitical explanations, neglecting internal and ideational factors, 'blackbox' the country which makes it impossible to understand, for example, why Russia perceives NATO as a threat but not China. In other words, taking into consideration only international sources and leaving aside leadership collective beliefs or the issue of national identity, they prevent us from understanding Georgia's and especially Ukraine's historical and emotional value for Russia and, therefore, make it impossible to fully understand Russia's motivations, to capture the whole picture. Consequently, the omission of domestic sources of foreign policy making may be even more problematic because this makes it impossible to examine the influence of the nature of the Russian regime and internal political dynamics, that are factors, which according to Russia analysts (McFaul, 2014; Cadier and Light, 2015a), more than ever, determine RFP choices toward post-Soviet space.

More broadly, geopolitical and realist accounts focus on continuity in foreign policy and as a result, they take a narrow perspective on change which is limited to shifts in power capabilities (Tsygankov, 2016, p. 11). Furthermore, international structure may push states in certain directions but it does not automatically determine all the outcomes because states and their leaders are also subject to other pressures and influences (Donnelly, 2005, p. 40). Finally, these approaches assume actors' rationality. However, as Stone (2012, p. 250) points out, the 'rational model ignores or neglects some of the most important modes of thinking and techniques that political leaders use to structure their decision making and to gather political support for their policy choices'. The next section presents domestic accounts of RFP.

Domestic explanations

Domestic explanations can be associated with liberal theory of IR. They emphasize the importance of internal over external concerns for RFP actions and are often used in the accounts of Russia's international behaviour. Lo (2002), Cadier (2015), and Donaldson and Nogee (2014) write about the superior importance of domestic interests related to economic and political development. The latter authors note that Moscow's foreign policy aims at the absence of external threats which could threaten the state's internal development. Guriev (2015), paying attention to the relationship between economic performance and RFP, argues that the annexation of Crimea was a distraction from domestic economic problems. Similar argumentation is presented by Stoner and McFaul who write that RFP did not change in response to Western actions but 'in large measure as a result of Putin's response to new domestic political and economic challenges inside Russia' (Stoner and McFaul, 2015, p. 175).

Other authors who underscore the importance of domestic factors, link RFP to regime insecurity and survival. Ambrosio (2007), Mendras (2015) and Trenin (2015) emphasize the relationship between the domestic situation and more aggressive foreign policy suggesting that the Russian leadership aims to contain the spread of democracy in neighbouring countries in order to prevent revolutionary tendencies at home. Bugajski (2009), Shevtsova (2010, 2014), and Cohen and Dale (2010) perceive Russian authoritarianism as being expansionist and suggest that the country's authoritarian culture requires the Kremlin to engage in revisionist behaviour abroad. Furthermore, Cadier and Light (2015) state that RFP is largely a continuation of internal politics by other means. Claiming that regime insecurity is the main driver of RFP, they (see also Mendras, 2015; Stoner and McFaul, 2015) write that after economic crisis and mass protests in 2011/2012 Putin had to find new ways to consolidate the regime's support and both nationalism as well as more assertive and anti-Western foreign policy were used for this purpose. Indeed, Russia analysts (Lucas, 2008; Shevtsova, 2015) speak about rising nationalism, while Donaldson and Nogee (2014, p. 14) explicitly write that in foreign policy Putin's actions 'could be summed up by the term *nationalism'*. As such, according to this line of argument, all of these factors as well as the Russian President's decreasing public support which in 2013 reached the lowest points since the beginning of his time in power (Gutterman, 2013) weakened the regime's and Putin's legitimacy which required the Kremlin to pursue more aggressive foreign policy.

All the above-listed sources demonstrate vitality of domestic factors and show that one cannot dismiss them when analysing RFP. Although these accounts explain many complexities of internal situation in Russia and its influence on RFP they also have their shortcomings. Diversionary arguments (Guriev) do not explain why Russia began to lead more assertive foreign policy when its economy started to recover, that is around 2003-04. Interestingly, others (Cadier, 2015, p. 163) claim that there was a clear positive correlation between the level of Russia's regional activism and the state of its overall economic performance. However, this argumentation fails to explain why in 2014, that is in time of worsening economic situation, Russia nevertheless annexed Crimea and decided for costly operation of supporting pro-Russian separatists in Eastern Ukraine. Furthermore, Casier (2012, p. 42) refutes the arguments about the regime survival arguing that the Kremlin is more interested in whether foreign regimes are loyal to Moscow, than whether they are democratic. Consequently, March (2012, 2018) and Laruelle (2015, 2017) show that relationship between nationalism and RFP is more complex. For instance, Laruelle (2015,

p. 96) points out that 'Russia may use a nationalist *post hoc explanation* but does not advance a nationalist *agenda'.* In addition, because the majority of domestic explanations neglect the impact of external sources, such as the change of power in Ukraine as a result of the Euromaidan revolution, they prevent us from understanding in reply to which external events some decisions were taken.

More broadly, domestic political explanations are characterised by selective focus and simplistic, unrealistic assumptions. For instance, their vision of foreign policy change is progressive and any conservative turns are considered as 'setbacks' which assume 'return' to the progressive liberal track (Tsygankov, 2016, p. 13). As a result, these approaches struggle to convincingly explain conflictual turns in states' foreign policy, especially as a 'direct correlation between authoritarian rule and an adversarial approach to international relations is difficult to prove' (Lo, 2015, p. 13). Finally, they suffer from a normative focus which, as March (2018, p. 84) points out, can lead to potential inaccuracy and exaggeration.

Ideational explanations

The third group of explanations emphasizes the importance of ideational factors like beliefs, ideas and identities. Clunan (2009) and Tsygankov (2016) write about the influence of identities on RFP and stress that different identity discourses are the main driving force behind the country's interests and foreign policy behaviour. Hopf (2002) also emphasizes the importance of identities but considers them as being created by everyday habits in society. Numerous scholars (Legvold, 2007; Suny, 2007; Donaldson et al., 2014) instead of changing identities, write about the problem with defining one and about Russia seeking a new national identity since the collapse of the Soviet Union. According to these explanations, the issue of national identity emerged because the disintegration of the Soviet Union left a conceptual void in the foreign policy of newly independent Russia (Donaldson et al., 2014, p. 13). Suny (2007, pp. 60–65) notes that after the collapse of the USSR, no consensus on national identity emerged in Russia and there is a constant problem to construct a coherent one that would be accepted by the population.

Other scholars explaining Russian international activity use *status theories* which deal with understanding of self-esteem, reputation and honour, and claim that search for greater international status plays important role in RFP behaviour. Forsberg (2014) asks what happens when the West ignores Russian self-defined status and what when the West addresses Russian concerns. Larson and Shevchenko (2010) show how the lack of respect to

Russia's great power aspirations may provoke anger and negative sentiments which may lead to disorder or even conflicts.

Ideational approaches present valuable arguments about the relationship between normative factors and foreign policy behaviour, but they too have their shortcomings. First, they neglect the significant GDP growth and Russia's general economic recovery in the first half of 2000s and its potential influence on international behaviour. In addition, as Gotz (2017) argues, ideational accounts do not explain why, although 'centrist' (pragmatic) identity was dominant since the mid-1990s, RFP became more assertive around 2004. More generally, Risse and colleagues (1999, p. 157) emphasize that such broad concepts as national identities do not determine political behaviour directly, saying that foreign policy decision makers have many possibilities available in a given collective identity and that 'actors hold collective identities relating to their nation-state […] but they also hold instrumental interests'. Furthermore, the main ideational frameworks dealing with identities in Russian foreign policy (Clunan, 2009; Tsygankov, 2016) almost completely neglect the identities-interests nexus assuming that national interests directly derive from national identities. However, as March and Olsen (1998) point out, this relation is not only subtler but causal arrows between identity and interest may run both ways. Last but not least, ideational approaches look at the impact of norms and ideas on changes in the international politics, but these changes eventually are grounded in human decision makers (Hudson, 2005).

Offensive or defensive foreign policy?

Apart from the above-mentioned classical foreign policy analysis explanations (geopolitical, domestic, ideational), the extensive part of the literature on RFP uses more normative narratives with analysts treating the Kremlin's international actions as either offensive and expansionist or defensive and reactive to Western actions.

Offensive explanations are often related to domestic foreign policy motivations. They can be also linked to liberal theory of IR due to the emphasis on Russia's political system and (lack of) democracy. Kanet (2007), Lucas (2008) and Herbst (2016) speak about offensive foreign policy behaviour and claim that Russia is in the process of restoring its great power status. Statements of this kind became commonplace as soon as Russia began to pursue a more assertive foreign policy in the mid-2000s. Lucas (2008) analysing RFP writes about 'the ideological conflict of the New Cold War between lawless Russian nationalism and law-governed Western multilateralism' (Lucas, 2008, p. 14), mentions Russia reverting to Soviet behaviour and warns that the less resistance Russia meets, the more assertive it becomes.

He presents a rather unilateral account of Russia and its foreign policy, not taking into consideration influence of Western actions and various international factors changing RFP. As for Russia's behaviour in the post-Soviet space, Shevtsova (2014) mentions 'Putin's doctrine', which aims at thwarting liberal-democratic norms within Russia and Western political interests in the wider world, as a direct reason for the recent conflict in Ukraine. A similar approach is presented by Andrew Wilson who explains that aggressive foreign policy behaviour exemplified by the annexation of Crimea results from 'Russia's addiction to dangerous myths – myths which, at some point in the 1990s, the world stopped correcting: that Russia had been 'humiliated'; that the former USSR was the 'lost territory' of historical Russia; that Russia's historic fear of encirclement was replaying itself because of NATO expansion' (Wilson, 2014, p. VII). In addition, writing about 'Russia run by some very weird people' (Wilson, 2014, p. 19) and completely neglecting argument about Russia's perception of being encircled or threatened by NATO expansion, he presents one-sided account and unambiguously blames Russian side for the conflict.

On the contrary, defensive approaches can be linked to geopolitical foreign policy motivations and realist IR theories. Sakwa (2015) and Mearsheimer (2014) argue that RFP toward post-Soviet states is defensive and arises from the post-Cold War system in which Russia was marginalised by the Western countries, especially the USA. Mearsheimer (2014, p. 1) directly blames the West for the recent conflict in Ukraine saying that 'the taproot of the trouble is NATO enlargement, the central element of a larger strategy to move Ukraine out of Russia's orbit and integrate it into the West. At the same time, the EU's expansion eastward and the West's backing of the pro-democracy movement in Ukraine - beginning with the Orange Revolution in 2004 - were critical elements, too'. In Lukyanov's (2014) and Lo's (2015) views Russia prefers to react, not lead the way. Lo (2015) draws an interesting conclusion that Russian activity in the post-Soviet space is often proportional to the extent of external interest in a given country, while Lukyanov (2014) writing that most decisive actions on the world stage are reactions to external events, claims that the 2014 crisis in Ukraine was no exception. He explains that in the ungovernable global chaos Putin strives to maintain the status quo and protect the country against new upheavals.

The offensive/defensive division, although presenting many important aspects and different opinions which improve our knowledge about Russia and its international actions, is not sufficient to understand deeper causes of the Kremlin's decisions. The offensive-expansionist narrative fails, for example, to explain why Moscow did not try to install

a puppet government in Tbilisi taking advantage of its military and political success (Tsygankov, 2012) or why the Kremlin did not decide to intervene in Kyrgyz riots in 2010 or in the coup that followed (Lukyanov, 2010). Furthermore, from the Western liberal perspective Russia's actions are aggressive, unreasonable and incomprehensible. The main cause of these misunderstandings, as Leichtova (2014, p. 25) writes, is the application of liberal expectations on the results of Russia's transformation. On the other hand, accounts presenting the Kremlin's actions from defensive point of view unilaterally concentrate on security issues. Moreover, the main drawback of many of these publications (Mearsheimer, 2014a; Sakwa, 2015) is their attention paid exclusively to Western actions and complete omission of the internal situation in Russia. To conclude, current approaches concentrating on one level of analysis leave much unexplained, like the understanding of Russia's perceptions and interactions between domestic and international factors. As such, as Gotz (2017) and March (2018) argue, more nuanced approaches, integrating different levels of analysis should be applied to the analysis of various aspects of RFP.

Current approaches - what is missing?

It is beyond doubt that changes in both domestic situation and international system influence states' foreign policy. As Putnam (1988, p. 427) emphasizes, a debate whether 'domestic politics really determine international relations, or the reverse is fruitless because both do'. Indeed, Russia scholars also note that both type of factors work together (Gorenburg, 2014) and in order to understand Moscow's foreign policy actions one needs to analyse not only behaviour of international actors but, most importantly, Russian domestic situation (Cadier, 2015, p. 157). Trenin (2015) emphasizes, that no recent issue has brought Russia's domestic and foreign policies as intimately together as Crimea and Ukraine. Kropatcheva (2012, p. 38) argues that analysing RFP towards the West, 'both the domestic context of action – material power capabilities, subjective self-perception and perception of international realities – as well as objective changes in the international context, that is the actions of the West, have to be taken into account'. However, such analyses need to pay more attention to the *internal-external factors nexus*, ask how and when they are influential, what relations are between them, and how they impact RFP behaviour. Indeed, Pursiainen (2000) and Gotz (2017) note that interactions and causal relations between different factors influencing Russia's international behaviour have been rarely discussed.

Furthermore, RFP scholars point to the need for greater attention paid to *Russia's perceptions*. Suslov (2016) writes about different perceptions of many important issues in

the West and Russia starting from the end of the Cold War, through different attitudes of what kind of state should Russia become after the dissolution of the Soviet Union and Russia's great power status, ending with different perceptions of the international order, post-Soviet space, and issues of state sovereignty and use of force. For these reasons, he argues, closer attention should be paid to Russia's perceptions in the analysis of its foreign policy. Cadier (2015) suggests that more emphasis should be placed on the examination of Russian decision makers' perceptions of Western actions. Tsygankov (2016, p. 14) also notes that various Western analyses of the Kremlin's international actions do not pay sufficient attention to Russia's set of perceptions. He emphasises the importance of understanding these perceptions and writes that 'even when Russia's actions seem similar to the behaviour of other members of the system, they originate from a culturally distinct source and can have a different meaning' (Tsygankov 2012, p. 8). In addition, Mearsheimer (2014b) underscores the significance of meanings given to actions and mentions an example of NATO expansion which rather than actual security threat was understood by Russia as a signal that the West would not care about its interests. He adds that even if in Western perceptions NATO enlargement was off the table after 2008, it is not how the Kremlin leaders saw it.

Finally, Gotz (2017) and March (2018) write about the need for a *multi-level approach* in the analysis of RFP. Gotz (2017) notes that in order to overcome shortcomings of many analyses, scholars should devote more attention to build synthetic accounts and focus on the relations between different causes and levels. March (2018) analysing the role of nationalism in RFP, states that only multilevel and theoretically eclectic regime-focussed approaches, which explicitly explore the intersection of different factors, can guarantee nuanced and non-normative analysis.

In order to address the criticism of different approaches and overcome limitations of the current literature on RFP this study will use a role theoretical approach. As Thies (2010) points out, in the application of role theory to FPA the individual and state level analyses are united through a focus on the leaders of the state. Role theory is also uniquely positioned to analyse the interplay between foreign policy decision makers and the constraints imposed by the domestic and international system. Last but not least, although numerous projects (Holsti, 1970; Le Prestre, 1997a; Cantir and Kaarbo, 2016b; Strong, 2019) have shown the theory's usefulness in the analysis of foreign policy behaviour, apart from a few exceptions (Chafetz, 1997; Grossman, 2005; Breuning and Pechenina, 2019) it has been rarely used in the analysis of RFP. Chafetz (1997) looking at sources of Russia's international conduct points

to the post 1991 division on three main identities and the country's international roles which arise from them. Grossman (2005) analyses shifts in Russia's NRCs and compares them to changes in Russia's voting patterns in the United Nations. Breuning and Pechenina (2019) examine the dissonance between Russia's major-power role and its auxiliary role as a sending country in intercountry adoption. However, there is no study which applies role theory to the analysis of RFP toward post-Soviet countries. To conclude, my project aims to contribute to RFP research by going beyond dominant-variable explanations, bringing different internal and external factors together, and proposing a multi-level framework.

Theoretical framework

This section describes the theoretical framework of the research. The first part presents role theory and the notions of role and national role conception as well as introduces the concepts of socialisation and alter expectations. In the second part, I deal with the issue of role change, present different sources which may influence such changes and explain the significance of leadership perceptions. Finally, I address the issue of horizontal and vertical domestic role contestation, and speak about the study's intended contribution to role theory.

Role theory

Role theory has its roots in sociology (Harnisch, 2011) and was introduced to FPA with the publication of an article by Kalevi Holsti (1970) who analysed statements of politicians from 71 countries in order to examine how they perceive their states' roles in the international system. After the first wave of applying role theory to FPA (Holsti, 1970; Wish, 1980), it recently regained its position among IR and especially FPA scholars (Harnisch et al., 2011a; Wehner and Thies, 2014; Cantir and Kaarbo, 2016b; Thies and Wehner, 2019). Role theory can combine material and ideational as well as internal and external factors. For this reason, scholars such as Cantir and Kaarbo (2016b) point out that it offers a theoretical model which is richer than those proposed by various IR theories, while Walker (1987, p. 249) treats role theory as a bridge between rationalist and non-rationalist explanations of foreign policy decisions. Traditional, rationalist IR theories concentrate on the distribution of material capabilities. Focusing on role, however, allows one to go beyond traditional explanations of foreign policy as the prudent search for power (Aggestam, 2006, p. 25). As for non-rationalist explanations, English School and Constructivist approaches include and emphasize the importance of ideational factors. However, they also often provide structural explanations (Wendtian constructivism) for state behaviour and offer little theoretical insight into the

importance of agency (Cantir and Kaarbo, 2016a, p. 3). In addition, constructivism often leaves aside domestic disagreements (e.g. see Hirata, 2016). Role theory, combining different levels of analysis (Thies, 2010) and bringing agency into the framework as well as taking into account contextual elements (Chafetz et al., 1996) and having potential for assessing the interactions of internal and external factors (Le Prestre, 1997a), can address these gaps and therefore contribute to the analysis of RFP. Last but not least, role theory emphasizes the importance of decision makers' perceptions about their state's position in the world, aiming to understand how they guide foreign policy behaviour (Breuning, 2017, p. 16).

In the field of FPA role theory treats states as actors who behave consistently with specific roles with which they identify (Adigbuo, 2007, p. 88). Walker (1992, p. 23) defines roles as 'repertoires of behavior, inferred from others' expectations and one's own conceptions'. Roles have an impact on how decision makers interpret their country's place in the international system and on foreign policy behaviour (Kaarbo and Cantir, 2017, p. 2). Elgström and Smith (2006, p. 5) point out that roles 'refer to patterns of expected or appropriate behaviour'. Indeed, role theory scholars emphasise lasting aspect of roles. Cantir and Kaarbo (2016, p. 6) write that they are 'somewhat stable elements of a country's sociocultural context' while Aggestam (2004, p. 88) notes that role is 'a concept that captures elements of continuity in foreign policy'. However, she also adds that, 'given a long enough time period, the role concept also captures processes of socialisation and thus provides insights into foreign policy change' (2004, p. 88). As such, role theory is not only useful in the analysis of continuity but also of change in states' foreign policy behaviour.

It is important to note that roles, although related to, should not be conflated with identities (Harnisch, 2011; McCourt, 2011, 2012). Naber (2011, p. 74) writes that an identity is a set of meanings that characterizes an actor in a role. As such, identity is focused on 'who we are' rather than 'what role we play' (Breuning, 2011, p. 25), while roles are about 'what we should do' rather than 'who we are' and 'carry more specific prescriptions for action' (Cantir and Kaarbo, 2016a, p. 18). According to McCourt (McCourt, 2012, p. 370), roles connect identity and actions. Consequently, it points to identity being a more static concept than role which implies that there can be several roles within one national identity. Scholars also theorise about the relationship of roles and national interests. Le Prestre (1997, p. 6) notes that NRCs 'expand the definition of the national interest beyond the more basic geopolitical factors that are linked to national survival' and power. He points out that roles impose certain obligations on states and help define their interests but can result in actions

that contradict states' national interests. Indeed, Adigbuo (2007) examines Nigeria's decisions which seemingly contradicted the state's national interests but were consistent with its NRC. In addition, Breuning (2016, p. 87) emphasises that role contestation can be helpful in identifying interests that shape particular roles. It indicates that roles help to determine national interests being conducive to some of them, while limiting others.

In his study, Holsti (1970) demonstrated that states can have and play different roles at the same time. In other words, decision-makers have 'role sets' out of which they can choose appropriate roles. Out of roles available in these role sets, countries 'enact multiple roles toward multiple alters (and vice versa) both simultaneously and over time' (Walker, 2017, p. 6). Roles available within role sets can have different levels of importance and supremacy (Chafetz, 1997; Thies, 2010; Harnisch, 2011; Breuning and Pechenina, 2019). Consequently, one can distinguish master and auxiliary roles (Thies, 2013; Wehner, 2015; Breuning and Pechenina, 2019). Master roles are states' overarching positions in the international system in which auxiliary roles are embedded (Wehner, 2015, pp. 437–439). States can enact auxiliary roles if they are consistent with their master roles but performance of these roles is also dependent on 'the context wherein the actor holding a master status is expected to act' (Thies, 2012, p. 34; Wehner, 2015, p. 439). Thies (2013, p. 3) explains that master roles limit type of roles which countries can be expected to perform and that they impose constraints on auxiliary roles. He adds that 'states will pursue auxiliary roles that are consistent with their master roles or will be subject to socializing pressure to abandon those auxiliary roles or make the transition to a different master status' (2013, p. 46). However, Breuning and Pechenina (2019, p. 5) point out that 'dissonance between a master and auxiliary role becomes salient when the latter gains political visibility'. The distinction between master and auxiliary roles and their interactions are important because they indicate the complexity of foreign policy-making processes and as such, can improve our understanding of states' international behaviour (see Breuning and Pechenina, 2019, p. 16).

National role conception framework

In order to understand why Russia's reactions to two sets of upheavals in the post-Soviet space were so different this research uses a framework based on national role conceptions (NRCs) and will examine the internal and external sources of these conceptions and associated behaviours. Holsti (1970, p. 245) was first to argue that a state's foreign policy is influenced by its NRCs which he defined as 'the policymakers' own definitions of the general kinds of decisions, commitments, rules and actions suitable to their state, and of the

functions, if any, their state should perform on a continuing basis in the international system'. As Wish (1980, p. 535) notes, NRCs offer a powerful tool for explaining variations in foreign policy behaviour. They also provide norms and guidelines which affect many aspects of decision making, therefore, the knowledge of the conception which is held by the leadership may help to understand why leaders act in the particular way and what (re)actions they expect from others. Holsti (1970) and Wish (1980) show in their studies that NRCs held by leaders are fair indicators of foreign policy behaviour of their states. Furthermore, Grossman (2005, p. 336) points out that the relationship between NRCs and state behaviour has long been recognized and that leaders behave in accordance with perceptions of their state's role in the international system. As such, role performance (foreign policy behaviour) depends on states' dominant NRCs. The study aims to examine, among other questions, how a NRC of *partner of the West* lost prominence and how the importance of *defender of compatriots* role increased and influenced RFP. I will also analyse whether and how Russia's self-perception as an increasingly important international actor affected dominant NRCs and RFP behaviour.

Role theorists (Holsti, 1970; Walker, 1987b; Le Prestre, 1997a) mention different sources of NRCs which will underlie the analysis of the nexus between internal and external factors. They include the structure of the international system, geographic location, socio-economic characteristics as well as policymakers' perceptions and definitions of the situation. Among the main external sources which have influenced RFP since Vladimir Putin became the president one should mention Western interventions in Iraq and Syria, the colour revolutions in the post-Soviet countries or expansion of NATO and the European Union (the significance of Eastern Partnership in the context of the Eurasian Economic Union). However, domestic sources of roles are no less important than external ones. Barnett (1993) notes that 'the state's survival is rarely at stake but the government's domestic standing frequently is, so it is possible that domestic-generated roles will have greater force than roles dictated by power considerations' (Barnett, 1993, p. 278). In Russia's case, among the most important internal sources one can list the 2008-09 economic crisis, mass protests in 2011/12 and President Putin's relatively low result in presidential elections at that time. As such, this research aims to understand how changes in NRCs were influenced by interactions of different domestic and international sources, for example, the 'colour revolutions' in the post-Soviet states and the Kremlin's measures taken to prevent such situation in Russia.

The proposed NRC framework will be based on decision makers' perceptions of internal and external sources. According to Breuning (Breuning, 2011, p. 31) 'national role conceptions held by decision makers do not preclude international and/or domestic factors as sources of change. Rather, the role conception framework emphasizes that such changes are interpreted by decision makers and do not have a direct and independent effect on changes in foreign policy behaviour'. An approach based on perceptions enables a researcher to ask how policymakers view roles which their nations should play in the international system. This is very important because as Sprout and Sprout (1957, p. 328) write 'what matters is how the policy maker imagines the milieu to be, not how it actually is'. Hudson (2005) also emphasizes the need to look at context as it is perceived and interpreted by the decision makers. She adds that 'culture, history, geography, economics, political institutions, ideology, demographics, and innumerable other factors shape the societal context in which the decision maker operates' (Hudson, 2005, p. 10). Perceptions therefore determine how state leaders define the situation and how they understand particular context. In their seminal work Snyder and colleagues (1962, 2002 p. 58) write that 'state X orients to action according to the manner in which the particular situation is viewed by certain officials and according to what they want'. The question is then less about the calculation of interests, but about actors' perceptions and understanding of the situation and interests. In order to understand a state's activities, often more important than actions themselves are perceptions of and meanings attributed to these actions by a country's leaders which often depend on the current internal situation. Role theory scholars (Holsti, 1970; Aggestam, 2006) emphasize that roles are sensitive to situational context and leaders' definitions of the situation are closely related to NRCs. Finally, foreign policy strategies are embedded in and limited by a set of perceptions (Cadier and Light, 2015b, p. 214) therefore, these factors are of great importance and have a direct influence on international decisions.

The ignorance of the meanings which are domestically shaped often results in misunderstandings of actors' actions. In other words, one cannot interpret all behaviours according to the same pattern because they may differ among nations, cultures or leaders' perceptions and ideas. In Russia's case analysts (e.g. Charap and Welt, 2015; Tsygankov, 2016) point to the Russian leadership inherently distinctive interpretation of national interests. For instance, Charap and Welt (2015, p. 70) note that 'when we encounter policies that fit our understanding, this does not mean Russian leaders have reasoned the way we do; when we identify policies that contradict our understanding, this does not mean other

levels of analysis must be at play'. Reading Russian sources and listening to Russian politicians shows that they often view international relations and particular crises in a very different way to the one which is common in the EU or in the USA. Therefore, this research framework, which is based on the Russian leadership perceptions of various internal and external factors, gives a unique opportunity to capture Russian point of view and, consequently, to understand the sources behind changes in Russia's NRCs, and bridge the Russian and Western narratives. For the above-mentioned reasons the study aims to 'see the world through the eyes of Russian decision makers' and analyse how they perceive domestic (their country, the values it represents, public expectations) and international factors (Russia's position in the international system, crises in the neighbouring countries, changing behaviour of the major powers).

Although role theorists such as Holsti (1970) and Breuning (2011) pay more attention to domestic sources of roles, these are also influenced by 'alter' expectations which Harnisch (2011, p. 8) defines as implicit or explicit demands by others. Expectations can be prescribed to the role-holder by other actors (Aggestam and Johansson, 2017) and are important because NRCs should respond not only to domestic demands but also to the imperatives of the international system (Wehner and Thies, 2014). It is therefore necessary to analyse what were the expectations of 'world opinion' and 'significant others' toward Russia before and during the upheavals in Ukraine and Georgia, how these expectations influenced Russia's roles and foreign policy decisions. This analysis may answer whether at the beginning of Putin's era Russia cared more about others' expectations and therefore was not ready for any radical steps toward its neighbours. For the above-mentioned reasons, it is essential to know who are actors with high role expectations of Russia, who are 'significant others'. According to Benes and Harnisch (2015, p. 150), a significant other can be easily identified as another state (or actor) most frequently represented in the domestic political discourse. Authors emphasize that historical self may also play role of significant other (Benes and Harnisch, 2015, p. 151).

The notion of a significant other is related to the concept of socialisation which Harnisch (2011, p. 13) describes as 'a process by which an outsider internalizes the behavioral rules previously set by a community of insiders'. However, as Thies (2013, p. 35) points out, the socialisation which occurs through a role location process is not limited to outsiders or newly emerging states (see Beasley and Kaarbo, 2018) but it also affects already existing members of international system. He explains that in the role location 'role expectations of

the self and other, role demands of the situation, and cues from the audience all come together to produce a role for the actor' (Thies, 2013, p. 35). Consequently, socialisation 'should be viewed most clearly in the context of role relationships between states in the system' (Thies, 2012, p. 28; see also Oppermann et al., 2020) where significant others become a kind of socialising agents and socialisation processes may lead to some evolutionary shifts in role conceptions and influence role changes across time.

Finally, it is important to mention that role conceptions cannot dictate every aspect of foreign policy behaviour (see Holsti 1970). Due to role theory's emphasis on the significance of individuality, one has to reckon with some decisions being inconsistent with the expectations and states national roles. Holsti (1970, p. 298) writes that NRCs may not adequately predict foreign policy behaviour when conceptions are weak or change rapidly and when leaders are unrestrained by popular sentiments, external expectations or traditional roles. Some of these limitations can be addressed paying more attention to domestic role contestation. Indeed, frequent critique of role theory has referred to the assumption about the national consensus and lack of domestic contestation over NRCs. As Kaarbo and Cantir (2012, p. 11) note, 'the NRC literature is weak on the elite-masses nexus and on intra-elite conflicts regarding a country's foreign policy'. Finally, few studies have investigated the connection between NRCs and foreign policy change and as such, causal mechanisms in these processes are not entirely clear (Breuning, 2017, p. 13). The questions of domestic role contestation and role change are discussed in the following paragraphs.

Foreign policy and role change

Before moving to the notion of role change, first it is important to explain the meaning of foreign policy change. This concept has been largely addresses in the IR and FPA literature but most authors focus on sudden changes that often occur after a crisis of some kind or result from an 'opportunity window'. As Blavoukos and Bourantonis (2017, p. 9) write, 'such crises highlight the inappropriateness of past policies to deal with new international developments and trigger a re-evaluation of current policies and practices'. In Russia's case one can think about several critical junctures, such as NATO intervention in Serbia, US invasion of Iraq or the colour revolutions that were to influence shifts in RFP. However, scholars have been writing about changes in Moscow's international behaviour since the mid-1990s (Mankoff, 2009; Tsygankov, 2016) which indicates that rather than abrupt shifts these were gradual, incremental changes.

As already stated, ‘foreign policy change entails the redirection to a lesser or greater extent of a state’s foreign policy’ (Blavoukos and Bourantonis, 2017, p. 1). This phenomenon has gained popularity among scholars especially since the end of the Cold War (e.g. see Carlsnaes, 1993; Checkel, 1997; Gustavsson, 1999; Alden and Aran, 2012; Blavoukos and Bourantonis, 2014). Indeed, the Cold War is generally considered as a period of stability in international relations, which favoured continuity rather than changes in states’ foreign policy (Holsti, 1982; Rosati et al., 1994; Blavoukos and Bourantonis, 2017). However, the end of this period marked significant shifts in the international system, which in turn generated changes in foreign policy of many states, such as USSR and later Russia.

Blavoukos and Bourantonis (2017) divide studies on foreign policy change into three categories: analyses which inductively identify factors of change; works which pay attention to various constraints (structural, cognitive and decision-making) of foreign policy change; and cyclical models which focus their attention on longer time frames and repetitive behaviours that lead to changes in foreign policy. This research aims to combine particularly features of the last two categories and focus on different factors which constraint or enable changes in foreign policy behaviour over a longer period of time. Foreign policy change is considered to be a ‘complex and multiparametric issue that requires an eclectic analytical approach’ (Blavoukos and Bourantonis, 2017, p. 20). Carlsnaes (2002, p. 449) notes that a synthetic model for the analysis of foreign policy is possible and argues that in the real life ‘action is always a combination of purposive behaviour, cognitive-psychological factors and the various structural phenomena characterizing societies and their environments, and hence explanations of actual foreign policy actions must perforce be able to give accounts that do not by definition exclude or privilege any of these types of explanans’ (Carlsnaes, 2002, p. 449). Consequently, role theory will offer a possibility of combining various factors from different levels of analysis through a focus on a state’s leadership and to employ the NRC framework that allows to do it in an organised and methodologically rigorous way. As such, this research follows Snyder and his colleagues who were first to identify the point of theoretical intersection between material and ideational factors, focusing on human decision makers rather than states (Hudson, 2002, pp. 3–4).

Role theory offers conceptual tools to theorize about foreign policy change (Breuning, 2017, p. 16). However, as Aggestam (2006, p. 23) writes, ‘roles have multiple sources and any attempt at explaining change will have to take this into account’. She also emphasizes roles sensitivity to context and time and notes that new, unexpected behaviour from other actors

may be an example of changing context. Holsti (1970) suggests that analysis of change in NRCs should include both internal and external sources which may influence the leadership decisions on the new roles. Harnisch and colleagues (2011b, p. 252) distinguish three types of role change: instrumental and strategic adaptation (change of instruments), learning (change of foreign policy goals), and transformation (change of interests). Apart from internal and external sources of change, authors also list other potential reasons such as severe crisis, uncertainty about roles resulting from shifts in relative power capabilities and the conception-performance gap (a gap between actual behaviour and ego expectations). Chafetz and colleagues (1996) note that changes in NRCs may depend on circumstances and are particularly likely when state's NRCs do not match international expectations. Last but not least, Kaarbo and Cantir (2012, p. 19) point to the importance of strategic use of roles as examination of this phenomenon 'can provide the underlying mechanisms for how national role conceptions change, with resulting changes in foreign policy behaviour'. These authors note that the expression of particular NRCs does not mean that they are sincerely promoted because roles may be strategically employed for political or personal goals, or to gain support for a specific policy (Kaarbo and Cantir, 2012, pp. 17–18; Cantir and Kaarbo, 2016a, p. 17). Consequently, by analysing changes in the distribution of NRCs during the four upheavals, I will examine whether potential shifts in dominant roles resulted from their strategic use by the Russian leadership and if so, what were the consequences for RFP behaviour.

The applied NRC framework will explore which external and internal factors prompted Russian leaders to reassess existing role conceptions and adopt new ones as well as to assess which circumstances made contemporary NRCs unacceptable for the leadership and therefore influenced changes in national roles. This framework can be tied to Gustavsson's (1999) model of foreign policy change which assumes the occurrence of changes in structural conditions, the presence of a crisis of some kind, and the importance of political leadership. In this research framework, as in Gustavsson's model, individual policymakers are not one of many factors but a crucial one which determines how external and domestic sources of change are interpreted and understood. The emphasis on political leadership suggests that decision makers may have a unique opportunity to revise NRCs when the other two factors are present. The NRC framework is also close to Snyder and his colleagues' (1962) approach which emphasizes the need to focus on the decision-makers and their subjective 'definition of the situation'. As Gustavsson writes this approach 'instead of treating the state like a black box and postulating a direct connection between structures and outcomes, conditions in the

environment are taken into account only if it can be shown that they influenced the decision-makers' (Gustavsson, 1999, p. 80). As the empirical chapters demonstrate, the definition of the situation and the resulting understanding of the four upheavals were key elements that influenced Russia's decisions toward Ukraine and Georgia.

This research will examine whether the junction of three factors listed by Gustavsson is necessary for NRC change and whether in case of simultaneous occurrence of these three conditions changes in NRCs precede changes in foreign policy behaviour. Further, Breuning notes that studies which analyse the relationship between NRCs and foreign policy change, such as Maull (1990) for Japanese foreign policy after WWII and Chafetz with colleagues (1996) for Ukrainian and Belarusian approach to nuclear weapons, investigate special periods in these states' history when changes in international behaviour were particularly likely (traumatic events of WWII for Japan and newly born Ukrainian and Belarusian states after the collapse of the USSR). Empirically investigating less revolutionary period in Russia's history, this research aims to contribute to our understanding of connection between NRCs and foreign policy change. Consequently, it will demonstrate whether changes in Russian NRCs directly lead to changes in international behaviour (see Grossman, 2005) or it is not necessarily the case due to some intervening steps in the form of domestic contestation. Cantir and Kaarbo (2016a, p. 16) point out that attention to domestic role contestation may explain changes and inconsistencies in roles and foreign policy behaviour, therefore, it is worth analysing whether NRC are used in various Russian leadership statements as a kind of 'tester' of public and elite moods. In such case, the public and/or opposition would act as a sort of intermediate step (factor) which by contesting (or not) different conceptions may influence changes in foreign policy behaviour.

Domestic role contestation

The study will address the gap identified by Cantir and Kaarbo (2012) and will focus on the issue of domestic role contestation, that are situations when changes in NRCs are opposed by elites (horizontal contestation) or by the public (vertical contestation). Scholarship on FPA has shown that the unitary state assumption is problematic, domestic consensus over a country's external relations is rare and elites are not insulated from the masses in foreign policy making what may impact the influence of roles on foreign policy behaviour (Cantir and Kaarbo, 2016a, pp. 2, 11). Furthermore, as other role theorists note (Le Prestre, 1997a; Aggestam, 2006), structural factors are not sufficient to explain the diversity of roles performed by countries. Domestic role contestation can be treated as a remedy against the

pitfalls of the 'unitary actor assumption' (Özdamar, 2016, p. 103). In Kaarbo and Cantir's (2017, p. 1) words the domestic role contestation 'identifies the key domestic actors that hold NRCs and hypothesizes that roles connect to foreign policy behavior via the domestic political process'. The authors point out that scholarship on domestic role contestation (e.g. see Melo, 2019; Strong, 2019) addresses critique of the assumptions of elite consensus and of elite-public agreement on NRCs. In other words, domestic role contestation looks inside the country and assumes that internal actors may contest which role should be central to the state. Consequently, as Hirata (2016, p. 57) points out, 'a salience order of NRCs' emerges in contestation processes and reflects power relations between domestic actors.

Although there is a common assumption of unanimity among Russian decision-makers, there are frictions within the leadership as well as individuals with different priorities and views on how to achieve them (Monaghan, 2012: 7). Furthermore, although the parliamentary opposition parties are considered as being loyal to the Kremlin (Remington, 2014) and non-systemic opposition is relatively weak, it is still important to include these actors in the analysis as they have various views on specific problems and, therefore, may play a role in domestic role contestation and, in turn, indirectly influence Russian foreign policy behaviour. As such, in Russia's case it will be crucial to examine whether domestic role contestation increased in internal debates on RFP when Russian leadership began to enact new roles and whether decisions on reactions to the upheavals in the post-Soviet space were contested between the elites as well as between the leadership and the public. The analysis of internal political developments and role contestation will therefore show whether the change in Russia's NRC was internally resisted and may help to answer why RFP has become more assertive or even aggressive since the mid-2000s.

As far as horizontal (intra-elite) contestation is considered, Donaldson and Nogee (2014) claim that rather than a calculated response made by a monolithic state, RFP emerges from the interaction of decision-makers who represent different personal and institutional perspectives and that foreign policy decisions can be shaped by the contests for influence among groups and individuals. Similar opinion is presented by Zygar (2016, pp. XIX–XX) who, writing that assumption about all decisions in Russia made by one man is only partially correct, argues that alternations which have taken place in the Kremlin's foreign policy are largely due to President's entourage which consists of people with various conflicting interests. Domestic actors in Russia who can pursue diverse role conceptions include opposition figures: both pro-Kremlin (Communist Party of the Russian Federation, Liberal

Democratic Party of Russia) and anti-Kremlin parties and activists (Yabloko, Navalny) as well as different departments and factions within the government, such as former security services personnel ('siloviki', particularly attached to Russia's great power status) and more liberal-minded politicians.

The analysis of vertical contestation will demonstrate whether public opinion in Russia acted as a constraint of role enactment by elites or rather, as in case of the Justice and Development Party (AKP) in Turkey, performance of new roles was possible due to the solid public support (Özdamar, 2016), which is far from being irrelevant for the Kremlin (March, 2012b). It is worth noting that non-democratic leadership can be constrained by the public because it has to deal with threats from the masses (Kendall--Taylor and Frantz, 2014, p. 44) and even when public opinion is manipulated, as in Russia by state-controlled media, not everyone succumbs to the dominant narrative, especially since people have access to other sources of information through newspapers and in particular, the Internet. Indeed, scholars (Zygar, 2016a; March, 2018) emphasize the significance of public opinion in Russia and its assessments of regime's politics, therefore, it is important to analyse how masses receive new roles and how strong is contestation of these new conceptions.

Consequently, it is worth paying attention to different NRCs advocated by public opinion because they may be indicative of people's moods and their expectations of a state's international behaviour. Role theory is useful here because analysing (changes in) NRCs used by leaders in terms of their convergence with a state's duties and responsibilities supported by the public, it can provide us with valuable insights regarding contestation processes and potential causal mechanisms. However, as Kaarbo and Cantir (2017, p. 12) write, the analysis of public NRCs is difficult due to the absence of surveys which directly ask about particular roles. Therefore, they suggest, role theorists have to rely on phraseology used by polling companies, as done by Gaskarth (2016) who refers to surveys of opinion in his analysis of domestic role contestation over the use of military force abroad by the UK. Similarly, Paris (2014) examines opinion polls to investigate shifts in Canadian public attitudes toward the state's foreign policy. His study has some important implications for role theorists. Presenting the discrepancy between the government's conception of Canada's international role and the public's liberal internationalist orientation he shows the significance of the analysis of public opinion attitudes toward states' NRCs.

Conclusions and contributions to role theory

To conclude, role theory will allow me to contribute to scholarship on RFP through the examination of the influence of leaders' perceptions of Russia's international duties and responsibilities on the state's foreign policy behaviour. This goal can be achieved due to the theory's potential to analyse the influence of structure on agents' (foreign policy decision-makers) understanding of their state's roles and the influence of their perceptions and decisions on foreign policy actions. Consequently, because role theory is uniquely positioned to combine wide range of causes, it will enable me to focus on the interactions of external and internal as well as material and ideational factors that affect RFP behaviour.

Furthermore, this research will contribute to the application of role theory to foreign policy analysis. First, Cantir and Kaarbo (2016, p. 2) point out that role theoretical scholarship 'continues to assume that a state's own expectations of what role it should play on the world stage are shared among domestic political actors' and that 'there is considerable room for empirical investigation and theoretical development' in this area. The study will address the criticism of the analysis of NRC as the expression of national consensus and will improve understanding of the influence of domestic disagreements on states' foreign policy by analysing horizontal and vertical role contestation in Russia. In particular, it seeks to contribute to still non-extensive research on domestic role contestation in non-democracies empirically analysing whether such processes existed in Russia and if yes, who were the actors that questioned NRCs dominant among the leadership, and in what circumstances.

Second, it is important to note that because few studies have investigated the relationship between NRCs and foreign policy change, 'it is not yet clear whether changes in national role conceptions precede behavioral change, or whether behavioral change leads to changes in role conceptions' (Breuning, 2017, p. 13). This research will address this gap by directly focusing on the connections between NRCs and foreign policy change as well as by identifying circumstances which lead to changes in NRCs, differentiating them between sources which trigger change and conditions which create broader context in which these changes may occur. Furthermore, and related, scholars write about the need to focus on 'the strategic use of roles, including the conditions under which it occurs, how effective it is, and its consequences' (Cantir and Kaarbo, 2016c, p. 187). As such, the study will link role change with the issue of the strategic use of roles which will demonstrate whether and if so, in which circumstances new NRCs are employed by leaders to justify various foreign policy actions. In addition, I will bring the two above points together and examine whether and when the

contestation of dominant NRCs by the opposition may lead to the strategic adoption of new roles by the leadership.

Third, scholars have been writing about role theory's lack of methodological refinement and rigor (Walker, 1987a, p. 242; Thies, 2010; Wehner, 2020, p. 360). I will contribute to recent inputs in this area by combining rigorous content analysis (see a codebook in the next chapter) and careful process tracing. To account for changes in Russia's roles and international actions, the method of process tracing will combine macro and mid-level processes. In addition, it will be helpful in discovering the mechanisms through which domestic role contestation may influence the selection of dominant NRCs and in consequence, states' foreign policy behaviour. Finally, the study follows the demand of current research for the importance of the decision maker's vantage point that impacts problem representation which, in turn, provides a useful foundation for the study of NRCs and may deepen our knowledge about policymakers' role conceptions (Breuning, 2011). The next chapter describes research methods that are used in order to attain the goals described above.

3. Methodology

This chapter presents research methods used in the study. The first section briefly mentions advantages of case study research, and presents content analysis and its application in the project. This part is followed by a codebook which describes the coding procedures of national role conceptions (NRCs) that were used for coding statements of Russian decision-makers and opposition leaders regarding Russian foreign policy (RFP). In the second section, I present the method of process tracing, describe its function in this research and briefly talk about ethical issues.

In order to answer the research questions and critically analyse various factors behind Russia's reactions to the four upheavals in the post-Soviet space, I will carry out a qualitative research based primarily on documentary analysis. Examining documents will be a useful way to identify attitudes and positions taken by Russian authorities. More generally, qualitative methodology allows researchers to delve deeper into the analysed problem, answer 'why' and 'how' questions and draw inferences regarding a particular phenomenon, which is especially important in the complex social and political world that is characterised by various interactions and their effects as well as by equifinality or multifinality (Bennett and Elman, 2006, p. 457).

Given the multi-causal theoretical framework, I will combine two qualitative methods: content analysis and process-tracing. By using multi-method research design, the study will address common criticism that role theory is conceptually rich but lacks methodological refinement (Walker, 1987a, p. 242). Furthermore, according to Mason (2002, p. 33), the integration of different methods allows to answer the same research questions from different angles and to analyse the problem in greater and lesser depth or breadth, using different techniques. In order to increase the reliability, diminish the risk of bias and offset weaknesses of one source by the strengths of the other, the study will rely on multiple secondary and primary as well as Russian and Western sources.[4] The research puzzle approached from different angles, which take into account different views, may provide additional data and alternative explanations which better capture the complexity of the investigated problem and may enrich understanding of it. While analysing different data, the study will concentrate on triangulation of data sources and of perspectives to the same data set (Patton, 2002). As Wehner and Thies (2014, p. 422) note, 'in the role conception process,

[4] When Russian sources were used, they were translated by the author of this research.

relying on secondary sources is part of a triangulation technique used for the purpose of contrasting and interpreting episodes related in spontaneous press declarations and in official documents'. That said, the main focus will be put on the 'completeness' function of triangulation. The completeness function is important for qualitative research in which 'any information that adds depth and breadth of understanding' (Arksey and Knight, 1999, p. 22) is useful.

Case study research

The project will focus on the analysis of four cases which present Russia's different reactions to the upheavals in the post-Soviet space. In the study of international relations, case studies offer particular benefits relative to other methods as they allow for the thorough empirical analysis which can uncover previously ignored factors (George and Bennett, 2005, p. 214) and enable researchers to identify plausible causal variables. Bleijenbergh (2010, p. 62) concurs and writes that case study research is relevant for revealing multiple causations of political phenomena. Furthermore, it is useful for studies which aim to answer questions 'how?' and 'why?' about different situations and, therefore, will enable me to carry out an in-depth analysis and to expose mechanisms behind and causes of Russia's international decisions. Finally, case studies have been frequently used by role theorists in order to connect roles to states' foreign policy behaviour and examine contestation processes (Cantir and Kaarbo, 2016a).

This research will use multiple-case study design because it is often considered more robust, conclusions more powerful and evidence more compelling than in a single-case study (Herriott and Firestone, 1983; Yin, 2013).[5] Gerring (2004) adds that in order to draw conclusions which could be generalised, research needs to move beyond single-case analysis. Furthermore, if researchers over-generalize from a small number of cases, their findings may overstate the relationship among the particular variables (Bennett and Elman, 2006, p. 461). The selection of cases is the key part of case study research. Using Most Similar System Design (MSSD) I compare similar cases which differ in the dependent variable. I selected cases that have comparable circumstances but different results so that by comparing them I could identify changes in external and internal conditions which led to Russia's different reactions. The rationale for case selection is twofold. Firstly, as the objective of the study is to

[5] The arguments about multiple-case study research were largely taken from my MSc by Research thesis.

understand changes in RFP, the four upheavals in Ukraine and Georgia are ideal cases because, representing Moscow's various reactions to two, at least seemingly, similar sets of events, they are highly comparable. I consider these events similar because they took place in the same region and were of a similar nature (mass protests, crises with breakaway republics). Furthermore, they came about in a relatively short period of time during which the Russian leadership remained almost unchanged. However, what is different about these cases is the outcome. In the first two instances Russia almost did not react while in the two following cases Moscow's actions were more aggressive and resulted in interventions. Secondly, I selected data-rich cases, which will enable me to answer more questions and what is particularly important, content analyse numerous statements and trace various decision-making processes.

Content Analysis

The empirical part of role theory research usually consists of two stages: role identification and their connection to foreign policy behaviour (Cantir and Kaarbo, 2016a, pp. 19–20). Following role theory scholars (Holsti, 1970; Hansel and Moller, 2015), the role identification process in this research is both inductive - I look for roles and identify them content analysing speeches, interviews and statements delivered by Russian politicians, and deductive as I have an idea that particular roles exist, also because they are similar to roles previously identified in role theoretical literature.

Content analysis is a reliable and transparent technique for generating data on NRCs (Breuning, 2017) and its use offers a methodological rigor for coding them (Thies, 2010). According to Dyson and Parent (2018), content analysis can be helpful in understanding and predicting the behaviour of foreign policy decision-makers because it enables researchers to decipher the beliefs and attitudes of policymakers, that is information which otherwise is very difficult to obtain. This research method seeks 'to meet the policy demand for real-time information about the decision tendencies of contemporary international leaders, and the academic demand for systematic and replicable analysis' (Dyson and Parent, 2018, p. 84). That said, when speaking about the analysis of beliefs, the question arises whether words can be treated as reflecting actors' thoughts and views. Suedfeld and colleagues (2005, p. 242) rebut this concern saying that 'it is obvious that thought processes underlie spoken or written communication' and therefore, we can assume that words which people say reflect their thoughts and beliefs. This argument is supported by Schafer and Smith (2017, pp. 10–

11) who claim that content analysis may reveal actors' beliefs because people talk about things which they think about. Finally, as for the analysis of Russian leaders, Hill and Gaddy (2013) write about the non-transparency of the means by which President Putin intends to achieve his objectives, but at the same time note that 'all the evidence from Putin's words and actions since 1999–2000 […] indicates that there is nothing contrived or secret about his goals and his policies. Putin's practice has been to state them directly' (Hill and Gaddy, 2013, p. 210).

Content analysis has been used by numerous analysts applying role theory (Holsti, 1970; Wish, 1980; Hermann, 1987; Le Prestre, 1997b). Holsti (1970), a pioneer of role theory in foreign policy analysis, used speeches and statements of policymakers in order to present their views on countries' roles in the international system. Consequently, following role theory scholars mentioned above, I will collect data on NRCs by content analysing statements (speeches, official communiques, press conferences, interviews and articles) of Russian top decision makers: president, prime minister, minister of foreign affairs and some close Putin's advisers. In addition, this method will be useful in identifying Russia's significant others and in determining whether NRCs expressed by the Russian leadership changed prior to changes in RFP. The rationale for focusing the search on the leadership is threefold. First, top decision makers' perceptions are of prime importance, especially in foreign policy making (Holsti et al., 1968; Spanier and Uslander, 1974). Second, following Chafetz and colleagues (1996, p. 740), I assume that any role conception with significant political weight is reflected in the statements of the top policymakers and their NRCs are most likely to have influence on foreign policy behaviour. Third, the highest decision makers act as connections between domestic and international forces. Finally, if one assumes that NRCs are used to explain foreign policy decisions, it is important to focus on NRCs of actors who make these decisions (Breuning, 2017, p. 9).

These individual perceptions of NRCs will be coded to discover how they describe the country's roles. Coding, following Le Prestre (1997) and Grossman (2005), will focus on assertions that refer to the leadership conceptions of the country's duties and responsibilities in the international system (more detailed information is presented in the codebook). As such, the identification of NRCs will be independent from each leader's definition of the concept. After the examination of statements, the expressed NRCs will be coded according to two sets of crises, that is 2003-04 colour revolutions as well as 2008 Russo-Georgian war and the 2014 Ukraine crisis. In addition, I will code statements which reveal to which

perceived internal and external sources particular roles are a response as well as according to the type of speech. The study will use open coding which generates concepts, that are grouped and turned into categories, and axial coding which then allows to put data back in new ways by making connections between categories (Bryman, 2015, p. 574). Following Hansel and Moller (2015), I will use speeches held in front of different audiences. These authors list two reasons for broader sampling. First, it increases the representativeness of data sources and minimizes the impact of personality traits or situational moods. Second, different audiences, both domestic and foreign as well as experts and laymen, decrease the effects of window-dressing (Hansel and Moller, 2015, p. 82).

While looking for evidence of horizontal role contestation, I will examine statements of opposition leaders, both parliamentary (Zhirinovsky, Zyuganov, Rogozin, Mironov) and non-systemic (Yavlinsky, Nemtsov, Navalny). Furthermore, the analysis of interviews with and statements made by former Kremlin insiders, such as Gleb Pavlovsky and Andrei Illarionov, may reveal domestic contestation processes and indicate internal elite's disagreements over NRCs and RFP directions.

Table 1: The main actors whose statements will be examined

Presidents	**Prime Ministers**	**Foreign Ministers**	**Opposition Leaders**
Vladimir Putin *05/2000 – 05/2008*	Mikhail Kasyanov *05/2000 – 02/2004*	Igor Ivanov *09/1998 – 02/2004*	Vladimir Zhirinovsky Gennady Zyuganov Sergei Mironov Dmitry Rogozin Grigory Yavlinsky Boris Nemtsov Aleksei Navalny
Dmitry Medvedev *05/2008-05/2012*	Mikhail Fradkov *03/2004 – 09/2007*	Sergei Lavrov *02/2004 – Present*	
Vladimir Putin *05/2012 - Present*	Vladimir Putin *05/2008 – 05/2012*		
	Dmitry Medvedev *05/2012 – 01/2020*		

In addition to gaining information on potential domestic contestation, another advantage of reading and listening to (former) regime insiders is getting to know their, and in general, the Kremlin's perspective of different situations and crises as well as getting some detailed information on decision-making processes, for example, who met with whom, when, and what was discussed. These sources can capture nuances of topics important to the understanding of changes in RFP like the different sources and mechanisms of change which influence RFP behaviour. Last but not least, they may enable me to understand the meaning

and representation of different situations (mainly the four upheavals) and foreign policy decisions from the Russian point of view. In other words, with these sources, I will study interpretations others than mine and those known in the West, which may provide a different understanding of the analysed phenomena and help to bridge the gap between Russian and Western narrations.

The majority of top decision-makers' speeches will be accessed via the President of Russia website as well as homepages of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation and of the Russian Government, that are sources which offer complete records of presidents', foreign ministers' and prime ministers' public speeches and interviews. As for the opposition leaders, more recent statements of Zhirinovsky and Zyuganov will be accessed via their parties' websites. The sources of Navalny's, Nemtsov's and Yavlinsky's speeches will be more diverse, including, among others, Russian as well as international newspapers and journals. The Current Digest of the Russian Press which presents a selection of Russian press materials as well as the Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty website will be additional useful sources of information and statements of opposition members, especially those from earlier years.

Consequently, to examine vertical role contestation, as this may be very difficult to speak about foreign policy issues to ordinary people, I will examine various opinion polls on RFP that can improve understanding of how the public views Russia's different international roles (see Kaarbo and Cantir, 2017). However, it is worth noting that Bukkvoll (2016) referring to a study done by Frye and colleagues (2015), suggests that 'a significant number of Russians are likely to say in opinion polls what they think the authorities would like them to say rather than what they actually think' (Bukkvoll, 2016, p. 270). Frye and his colleagues (2015) indeed acknowledge that there may exist a 'small but not trivial' bias among respondents, nevertheless, conclude that, at least in opinion polls measuring Putin's popularity, Russians reveal their true attitudes (Frye et al., 2015, p. 3,6). In addition, Mankoff (2009) emphasises the importance of opinion polls on RFP writing that they demonstrate that Russian public has strong views and preferences regarding international politics and issues related to national security.

I will mainly use opinion polls conducted by the Levada Center because it is continuously considered as an independent polling and research institute which objectively presents survey results (Bukkvoll, 2016; Bacon, 2017). The analysis will focus on opinion polls regarding the examined upheavals, RFP more generally and the regime's popularity. These

opinion polls will demonstrate, among others, how the public's attitudes and expectations of Russia's NRCs shifted throughout the analysed period, how they changed with the development of events in Ukraine and Georgia and what were, if any, the regime's reactions to these changing opinions. For instance, the Levada polls show how the public's perception of the events in Ukraine in 2013/14 changed and how these perceptions were different regarding the annexation of Crimea and potential military operation in Donbass (Gudkov, 2014a; Levada, 2013a, 2014d, 2014e).

Codebook

This codebook contains instructions of the coding procedures which were used for coding of statements made by Russian decision-makers and opposition leaders regarding Russian foreign policy. Preparing these instructions I built on codebooks created by Breuning (1995) and Hansel and Moller (2015). The first stage of coding (the Orange Revolution and the Euromaidan revolution) was conducted in the second half of 2018. The second stage (the Rose Revolution and the Russo-Georgian War) took place in the first half of 2019. The first section of the codebook describes periods of analysis and general selection criteria. In the second part, I present examples of NRCs that were most often used by Russian leaders.

Periods of analysis

The content analysis was conducted for four periods which correspond to upheavals in the post-Soviet space. In order to examine how NRCs expressed by Russian politicians changed along with the developments in Ukraine and Georgia, the study covers wider periods than the crises themselves.

Table 2: Periods of analysis

Case study	Period of analysis
The Rose Revolution	1.10.2003 - 30.05.2004 - this period stretches from the time before the Revolution (3-23.11.2003) to the end of Adjara Crisis which was resolved in May 2004
The Orange Revolution	15.07.2004 – 28.02.2005 – the period extends from the beginning of the campaign before presidential elections which led to the Orange Revolution (22.11.2004 – 23.01.2005) to the end of February 2005, that is a month after the conclusion of the Revolution.
The Five-Day War	1.06. - 30.09.2008 - this period stretches from the time leading to the Russo-Georgian War (7-12.08.2008) and ends one and a half months after its conclusion
The Ukraine Crisis	1.10.2013 – 07.05.2014 – the analysed period extends from the time leading to the Euromaidan revolution (21.11.2013 – 23.02.2014) to the beginning of the war in eastern Ukraine (6.04.2014 – present).

In general, the analysis starts 2-3 months before the beginnings of the upheavals and finishes 1-2 months after their conclusions. The exception was made for the 2013/2014 Ukraine crisis which continues to this day but the analysis focused on its hottest stages: the Euromaidan revolution, the annexation of Crimea and the beginning of the war in Donetsk and Luhansk (collectively called the 'Donbass') in eastern Ukraine.

General selection criteria and coding

The research process involved reading speeches and statements of Russian top decision-makers and oppositionists delivered in the four above periods. From these documents, any statements which included reference to Russia's duties and responsibilities in the international arena were selected. The following questions allowed me to orderly code statements in which NRCs appeared:

- What is the date of the statement?
- Who is the speaker? (President, Prime Minister, Minister of Foreign Affairs, etc.)
- What is the type of document? (Article, Interview, Speech)

A role was identified when 'Russia' or pronouns like 'we' or 'us' were mentioned in relation to the state's duties and responsibilities. Roles were generated during the initial analysis that guided identification process in further stages of the research. A large part of NRCs is consistent with role theory literature but there are also NRCs which are case specific, such as *advocate of Ukraine's sovereignty* or *supporter of South Ossetians* and result from events that took place during the analysed upheavals. If more than one NRC was mentioned in a sentence, each of them was counted separately. If a NRC appeared in a statement several times and concerned the same issue, it was counted only once. However, if the same role conception was mentioned in different parts of an interview (e.g. answering questions on various topics), then roles were counted separately (see also Hansel and Moller, 2015).

Last but not least, following Cantir and Kaarbo (2016, p. 19), I expect some overlap between statements of policy preferences and statements of role conceptions, however, I consider them to be theoretically separate. As such, before presenting NRCs and their examples, it is important to explain the difference between a role statement and a policy statement. For instance, 'we support the process of forming a government in Lebanon based on the realization of the initiative which the League of Arab States came up with' (Lavrov, 2008a) or 'we are also prepared to support all your efforts directed towards political stabilisation in your country [Iraq]' (Putin, 2004a) are examples of policy statements because they speak about concrete policies and actions, and therefore were not coded as roles. On

the other hand, 'Russia has always respected the sovereign rights of all participants in the international community, and will continue to do so' (Putin, 2014a) is a role statement and was coded as *advocate of states' sovereignty*. Roles generally embrace some broader ideas about states' international duties and responsibilities which may lead to concrete policies. Nevertheless, it should be noted that the line between policy and role statements is very thin and decisions were often made on case by case basis.

National Role Conceptions

This section briefly introduces the main NRCs that were identified during the coding process. These conceptions were divided into three categories: international, regional and domestic.

International roles

Advocate of states' sovereignty - this NRC refers to the belief that states should act independently (often from Western countries, mainly USA) and that it is Russia's duty to support the aspirations of these states to be sovereign. Except for Ukraine, which was mentioned as often as all other countries together and was therefore counted as a separate NRC, this role was most frequently used in relation to the Middle East and Arab Countries.

Example*:* 'Russia sticks strictly to the principle of non-interference in the domestic affairs of sovereign countries, respect for the right of the people to choose the ways of their development and forms of state structure, freely and independently, in all their mutual relations with other countries' (Lavrov, 2013a).

Partner of the West (also: ally of Western countries, strategic partner of NATO) - this role defines Russia as a partner of the European Union, the USA and NATO. Russia was most often described as a partner of the EU but several times Russian leaders also mentioned the need for partnership or even strategic partnership with the USA and NATO.

Example*:* 'Russia does not aspire to becoming a member of the EU in the foreseeable future. At the same time, we are ready to go in the development of our partnership with it as far as the European Union itself is ready for that' (Lavrov, 2004a).

Promoter of international anti-terrorist initiatives (also: advocate, initiator, supporter, member of international anti-terrorist coalition) - this NRC is based on Russia's perceived responsibility to fight terrorism at home and abroad and often presents the country as an initiator of multilateral anti-terrorist initiatives.

Example*:* 'The fight against terrorism and against other threats and challenges through strengthening the multilateral elements in world politics, through strengthening the United

Nations role in world affairs is a foreign policy priority for Russia […] We support all the initiatives that are aimed at increasing the ability of the world community to fight this evil, to fight terrorism' (Lavrov, 2004b).

Supporter of international cooperation - this NRC is based on the belief that Russia should initiate and support international cooperation as well as common solutions to various crises and conflicts, like the one in Iraq.

Example*:* 'We work with all countries in the world on a bilateral basis and support the expansion of cooperation in the framework of international organisations, including the creation of appropriate structures in the framework of the UN' (Putin, 2004b).

Defender of the peace (also: supporter of the peace and peaceful/political way of solving conflicts) - this role was used in reference to a variety of different conflicts and crises around the world, like these in Afghanistan, Syria and North Africa. Each time when this NRC was mentioned, Russian leaders emphasized Russia's contribution to the establishment of peace or their general support for peaceful, diplomatic settlement of conflicts.

Example*:* 'We believe that today international stability is one of the main values for the international community to cherish […] That is why Russia consistently supports evolutionary, not revolutionary, path of development and advocates focusing international efforts on peaceful settlement of regional crises' (Lavrov, 2013b).

Supporter of international law (also: advocate, defender of international law) - this role presents Russia as a supporter and defender of international law in general and in various situations, such as the Kosovo issue and the conflicts in Syria or Ukraine. It is related to Russia's advocacy of strengthening of the United Nation's role in international affairs.

Example*:* 'Russia makes respect and the observation of international law by all countries the cornerstone of its relations, it aspires to perform its international obligations in good faith – we cannot imagine international communication and development of international cooperation in different areas without it' (Lavrov, 2013c).

Advocate of multi-polarity (also advocate of multi-polar world order) - this NRC is based on the conviction of Russian leaders about the changes taking place in the world affairs and Russia's role in adjusting the international system to these shifts by promoting the concept of multi-polarity.

Example*:* 'In pursuing our foreign policy, we strictly observe the five principles articulated by President Dmitry Medvedev: [among others] multipolarity of the contemporary world' (Lavrov, 2008b).

Promoter of the new security system in Europe - this NRC originates from the Russian leadership belief that the security system in Europe is no longer working and as such, there is a need to create a new security architecture. Assertions coded as this NRC are probably the closest to policy statements, nevertheless, they were classified as a role due to their lasting character and the nature of leaders' statements, which presented Russia as an advocate of such a system in contrast to other European countries, which did not seem to see such a necessity.

Example*:* 'It is about the necessity […] to look again at the mechanism using which we and all the countries situated in the Euro-Atlantic space can effectively counter those threats in our common interests, without infringing on anyone. […] The ultimate aim of this entire work, which ideally is about concluding a treaty on European security, should consist primarily in making security truly indivisible' (Lavrov, 2008c).

Regional roles

Defender of compatriots (also: protector, (peaceful) defender of Russians and Russian-speaking population living abroad; protector of Russians and Russian-speaking people in Ukraine; supporter of Crimean people) - this role encompasses expressions which were related to the protection of Russians and Russian-speaking people living abroad. As Russian leaders were referring separately to the responsibility of supporting Ukrainian nation, statements expressing the duty to protect people in Crimea (75% of Russians; 97% of Russian-speaking population) and Eastern Ukraine (39-55% of Russians; 89-93% of Russian-speaking population) (Analitik, 2005) came under this category.

Example*:* 'The most important part of our foreign political activity always is protection of rights and legal interests of our nationals and expatriates' (Lavrov, 2013d).

Supporter of threatened people (South Ossetians, Ukrainians) (also: supporter/defender of South Ossetians, supporter of Ukrainian nation, protector of interests of Ukrainians) - for the purpose of comparative analysis of dominant NRCs this role was merged from two separate NRCs from two different crises which, however, have the same character. As such, during the Five-Day War Russian leaders spoke about their state's duty to defend Abkhazians and South

Ossetians while during the Euromaidan revolution decision-makers referred to Russia's responsibility to support and protect the Ukrainian people.

Example*:* 'We will completely fulfil our duty in protecting the South Ossetian population' (Lavrov, 2008d).

Advocate of Ukraine's independence - this NRC refers to the perceived obligation to support Ukraine's sovereignty, especially in the context of the Euromaidan revolution and change of power in Kyiv, which according to the Russian leadership was orchestrated by the Western powers.

Example*:* 'The President of the Russian Federation Vladimir Putin said many times that everybody must respect sovereignty of the Ukrainian state, and all of us would respect the choice made by the Ukrainian people' (Lavrov, 2013e).

Regional mediator (also: guarantor, mediator of agreements in the post-Soviet space) - this role refers to the belief that Russia should play a role of intermediary and mediator (rather than taking sides) in settling various crises in the post-Soviet area, like the Rose Revolution in Georgia or the Orange Revolution in Ukraine.

Example*:* 'As for Russia's role in settling disputes in the post-Soviet area in general, my position is that Russia is ready to act as mediator in settling any of the complex issues that we have inherited from the empire that was the Soviet Union. We understand the whole complexity of these problems better than anyone else and we have a sincere interest in settling all these conflicts' (Putin, 2004c).

Guarantor of regional order - this NRC defines Russia as a country that is responsible for maintaining regional stability and security, for example, through contribution to the settlement of territorial conflicts in the post-Soviet space, like these in Abkhazia, South Ossetia and Transnistria.

Example*:* 'Historically our country has had and, objectively still has today, a significant and already established role in maintaining regional stability throughout the territory of the Commonwealth of Independent States. We have already achieved much in this area and have gained unique experience' (Putin, 2005).

Domestic roles

Internal developer - this NRC refers to the leadership perception of the responsibility to ensure internal development of Russia. Foreign policy is seen as a tool whose main task is the creation of favourable external conditions for the realisation of this goal.

Example*:* 'Stability, which we have also just talked about, is something that we value today, but it is really just a prerequisite for development, and the aim of development is to make our people more prosperous. To achieve this goal, we must take responsible steps towards modernising our economy and social sphere' (Putin, 2004d).

Process Tracing

In order to connect roles to foreign policy behaviour I will use a process tracing method which attempts to trace the intervening causal mechanisms between different variables and enables researchers to analyse whether the variable of interest was causally linked to any change in outcome. Checkel (2005, p. 6) notes that process tracing is suitable for examining interactions and 'how' questions. Beach (2017, p. 3) adds that it shifts 'the analytical focus from causes and outcomes to the hypothesized causal process in-between them'. In George and Bennet's (2005) words, it is a useful method for generating and analysing data on 'processes, events, actions, expectations, and other intervening variables, that link putative causes to observed effects' (George and Bennett, 2005, p. 214). Furthermore, as suggested by Bennett and George (1997), rigorous analysis which employs process-tracing can show 'whether seemingly causal variables are spurious and to uncover supposedly unrelated variables that may in fact be causal' (Bennett and George, 1997, p. 13). The method can be used in single- and multiple-case studies which allow for separate investigation of various processes (Bennett and George, 1997, p. 21; Bennett and Elman, 2006, p. 459). Finally, process tracing may be especially useful for social and political scientists as it allows them to analyse phenomena which result from multiple independent variables and to narrow the list of potential causes through a detailed and systematic investigation (Hall, 2000; Bleijenbergh, 2010).

In explaining-outcome process-tracing, which will be applied in this research, the above-mentioned mechanisms refer to systematic mechanisms, case-specific, non-systematic mechanisms (events leading to an outcome) and eclectic case-specific conglomerates of different mechanisms (Beach and Pedersen, 2016, p. 22). This kind of research requires a preliminary understanding based on the literature review, therefore, the first stage involves close examination of existing scholarship in order to find out potential mechanisms which may explain Russian foreign policy behaviour. Consequently, process tracing will be an instrumental tool in the comparison of Russia's reactions to the four upheavals in the post-Soviet space because it allows analysts to investigate whether

potentially causal variables which differ between comparable cases can or cannot be excluded (Bennett and George, 1997, p. 14). In addition, it may enable me to assess whether independent variables that changed over time (e.g. international situation, Russia's domestic context, the structure of Putin's advisers) were instrumental for shifts in RFP behaviour.

In role theoretical research careful process tracing can deepen the understanding of the causes and effects of role conception change (Breuning, 2017, p. 13), therefore, it will help me to unpack the potential causal processes that occurred between different factors and outcomes, that is Russia's reactions to the four upheavals. In other words, this method will be used to trace possible interactions between sources and change of NRCs as well as to analyse congruence between NRCs and foreign policy behaviour toward Ukraine and Georgia before and during the four crises. For instance, the examination of verbal material will demonstrate if and how statements made by Russian leaders changed during the upheavals in the post-Soviet space and whether (and how) the frequency of NRCs employed by these leaders altered. This analysis should demonstrate if and how one role was privileged over another and was being replaced due to changes in attitudes and positions of agents.

Analysts dealing with RFP point to the importance of different variables (external, internal, ideational), hence an even greater need for a careful process tracing which includes and connects all of these factors. As such, in this research process tracing will also be used at a more macro-level and for example, I will closely examine changes in Russia's relations with its main significant other (the West) as well as with Ukraine and Georgia. However, apart from the developing international situation or changing domestic context in which RFP has become more assertive, there is a need for focusing on mid-level processes related to domestic role contestation and foreign policy decision-making. Cantir and Kaarbo (2016, pp. 19–20) note that process tracing may be helpful 'in identifying the causal mechanisms through which role contestation affects a country's foreign policy decision-making process or behavior'. Consequently, with nationalist ideas moving from the periphery to the centre of the debate (e.g. see March, 2012) and with Russia's increasing international activity, I will examine how old and new NRCs were horizontally and vertically contested, what were the questions that were particularly disputed and how these role debates shaped RFP. To attain this goal, I will seek to identify Russia's international duties and responsibilities that were advanced by opposition as well as the public views on foreign policy.

Furthermore, as process tracing enables researchers to dedicate more time (comparing with other methods) for a comprehensive empirical analysis, which allows for the

study of international behaviours below the state level and 'establishing precise sequences of who knows and does what when' (Bennett and George, 1997, p. 19), this method will be particularly useful in the analysis of foreign policy decision-making processes. The examination of these processes may shed new light on the aspects that have hitherto been surprising and incomprehensible. The validity of such analysis is shown, among others, by Bukkvoll (2016), Forsberg and Pursiainen (2017) as well as Dyson and Parent (2018), who through theoretically informed case studies and content analysis, examine the procedure of foreign policy decision-making in Russia, Putin's personality characteristics and leadership style, and cognitive processes like, groupthink. Consequently, in my research I will use various primary and secondary sources which refer to foreign policy decision-making during the four crises in the post-Soviet area. The examination of changes that occurred in the Putin's circle of advisers between the four upheavals as well as in the decision-making processes themselves, can be informative for the explanation of different reactions to these crises. In addition, the analysis showing who met whom and when, and of the sequence of decisions taken, may demonstrate that RFP is not (only) about national interest but there are other factors which matter, such as actors who meet, their views and perceptions, as one may infer from Putin's account of his meeting with closest advisers during which they decided about the annexation of Crimea (Crimea Way Back Home, 2015).

Ethics[6]

It is important to mention the problem of bias in political research, that has been addressed, among others, by Becker (1967, p. 240). He writes that researchers who use case studies are particularly prone to bias because they need to understand different issues beforehand, which may lead to be biased toward supportive evidence. In order to minimise the risk of bias mentioned by Becker, I will aim to be as open as possible to the contrary evidence and understanding different than hitherto. Furthermore, in order to address 'am I being fair' question and reduce any potential bias resulting from my background, I will use sources from as wide a source-base as possible, including these presenting Russian point of view, such as statements and speeches of Russian politicians as well as Russian TV and newspapers to understand a wider context.

[6] This section was largely taken from my MSc by Research thesis.

Conclusions

To conclude, a qualitative study that combines content analysis of various statements with process tracing will enable me to analyse dominant role conceptions and the potential influence of their changes on RFP behaviour and Moscow's reactions to the four case studies examined in the project. Consequently, by connecting meticulous processes tracing at macro- and mid-levels, for example, through scrutinising processes of foreign policy change and domestic contestation, the study aims to contribute to FPA scholarship. The next four chapters use the research methods described above to analyse NRCs advocated by the Russian leadership, opposition and public opinion during the four upheavals in the post-Soviet space: the Rose Revolution, the Orange Revolution, the Five-Day War and the Ukraine crisis.

4. The Rose Revolution and Russia's national role conceptions

This chapter examines Russia's national role conceptions (NRCs) during the Rose Revolution in Georgia. The analysis includes statements of Russian top decision-makers (mainly President Vladimir Putin and Ministers of Foreign Affairs: Igor Ivanov and his successor Sergei Lavrov) as well as key members of the Russian elite (like the Defence Minister, Sergei Ivanov) in the period spanning from October 2003 to May 2004. The first section introduces the Rose Revolution and summarises how it has been presented in literature. The second part briefly describes NRCs that were most often used by Russian leaders, while the third one investigates changes in their use. The following sections look closer at three main levels of analysis: international, domestic, including contestation processes among Russian elites and public opinion, and individual. The chapter demonstrates that the emphasis on internal development was a key factor which determined the dominance of pro-cooperative NRCs and influenced Russia's reaction to the Rose Revolution. However, it shows that there were some important intra-Kremlin contestation processes and that also a more assertive scenario toward Georgia was considered.

The Rose Revolution and Russia's reaction to it: state of the art

The Rose Revolution started after the fraudulent parliamentary elections that took place on 2 November 2003. The Georgian authorities headed by President Eduard Shevardnadze initially tried to ignore mass demonstrations, but when Shevardnadze was opening the new Parliament, the opposition leader, Mikhail Saakashvili, stormed into the parliament building with hundreds of his supporters holding roses in their hands (Nilsson, 2009, p. 88; Companjen, 2010, p. 16). 'Alarmed at the turn of events, Russia dispatched foreign minister Igor Ivanov—himself half Georgian—to defuse the situation' (Stent, 2014, p. 107). As a result of Ivanov's mediation as well as talks with opposition leaders Saakashvili and Zurab Zhvania, Shevardnadze resigned (RFERL, 2003a). After his resignation, new presidential elections in January 2004 were decidedly won by Saakashvili (RFERL, 2004a). However, the Rose Revolution did not finish with the success of protesters in Tbilisi and Saakashvili's arrival to power. In the aftermath of these events, the revolution spread to Adjara, a semi-autonomous region of Georgia. During the critical phase of the crisis there, Putin helped the central government instead of supporting the Adjaran leader Aslan Abashidze, despite his pro-Russianness, opposition to the closure of Russian military base in Adjara (RFERL, 2003b) as well as his numerous trips to Moscow and high-level meetings with senior Russian officials

to secure Russia's support (RFERL, 2004b, 2004c; Toal, 2017, p. 147). The Russian President again sent Ivanov to settle the problem and persuade Abashidze to resign. After Abashidze's departure for Moscow, Saakashvili thanked Putin for his assistance in the peaceful resolution of the crisis (Illarionov, 2009, p. 55). Looking from today's perspective, behaviour of Russian leaders - assistance with the transition of power to pro-Western opposition and mediation in Adjara - appears puzzling, especially compared to the regional crises in 2008 and 2014.

Scholars differ in their assessment of these events and of Russia's attitude toward the Rose Revolution in general. Some analysts point to Putin's critical reaction to the revolution and his preference of Shevardnadze over Saakashvili (McFaul and Spector, 2010, p. 119; Wilson, 2010, p. 28). Delcour and Wolczuk (2015) go a step further and argue that Russia considered the protests and generally processes which led to Shevardnadze's resignation as a coup d'état. A more nuanced view is presented by March (2012, p. 25) who notes that it was mainly Russian nationalists who saw the Revolution in a very negative way because they considered it as being 'destabilizing for the whole North Caucasus, and a foothold for US influence in the region'. On the other hand, there are many opinions which say that Moscow did not necessarily want Shevardnadze to remain in power because already during his presidency Georgia had begun to pursue a pro-Western foreign policy and started close military cooperation with the US (see Nilsson, 2009; Companjen, 2010). Analysts note that Shevardnadze's relationship with Russia was difficult (Stent, 2014, p. 104) and that Georgia under his rule established and was member of GUAM (Georgia, Ukraine, Azerbaijan, Moldova), the only regional post-Soviet organisation in which Russia did not play a pivotal role, which was seen as an anti-Russian alliance and creation of which was supported in Washington (Shearman and Sussex, 2009, p. 17). All these factors, combined with Shevardnadze's role in the dissolution of the USSR led to the fact that he was not very popular and liked by a large part of Russian elites. As such, although some people in the Kremlin perceived the developments in Georgia sceptically (see Toal, 2017, p. 147), others saw the change of power as an opportunity for a new opening in relations with Georgia (see Stent, 2014, p. 109; Suchkov, 2018).

Analysts writing about the Rose Revolution mainly focus on Georgian internal factors which led to it and US support for the Revolution (see Fairbanks, 2004; McFaul and Spector, 2010), rather than on Russia's reaction which may indicate that lack of Moscow's aggressive response was not a surprise at that time. However, if one compares this reaction, especially Russia's assistance with the resolution of Adjaran problem, to Russia's military intervention

in South Ossetia, another separatist region of Georgia, in 2008, the question 'why had not Russia done the same in 2004?' arises. As such, the existing accounts offer important insight regarding the Rose Revolution itself but do not provide convincing explanations as to why Moscow reacted to the situation in such a pro-cooperative way. This chapter aims to address this gap and answer what can explain the puzzling behaviour of Russia.

The Rose Revolution and Russia's national role conceptions

This section introduces NRCs that were most frequently used by the Russian leadership from October 2003 to May 2004. It presents aggregated NRCs in order to show which roles were most frequently used by Russian top decision-makers throughout the whole crisis in Georgia. The analysis reveals that there were seven NRCs which were most often used by Russian leaders: partner of the West, internal developer, regional mediator, supporter of international cooperation, advocate of anti-terrorist initiatives, supporter of international law and supporter of the United Nations (see table 2).

Table 3: Russia's NRCs throughout the whole analysed period (10.2003- 05.2004)

National role conception	Frequency (abs.)	Frequency (%)
Partner of the West	28	25%
Internal developer	15	13%
Regional mediator	12	11%
Supporter of international cooperation	11	10%
Advocate of anti-terrorist initiatives	8	7%
Supporter of international law	7	6%
Supporter of the UN	7	6%
Miscellaneous	24	22%

Source: Russian leaders' statements

Russian leaders definitely most often talked about their country's role as a partner of the West (25% of all coded assertions). This NRC was followed by internal developer role which was especially often used by President Putin (80% of all references). The third and fourth NRCs: regional mediator and supporter of international cooperation were used almost equally often and accounted for 11% and 10% respectively. The second of these conceptions was evenly used throughout the entire analysed period, while the NRC of regional mediator was most often invoked in the second phase of the crisis, which included, among others, protests in Georgia after the parliamentary elections. The NRC of advocate of anti-terrorist

initiatives also had international character but was separated from more general conception of supporter of international cooperation because Russian leaders often spoke specifically about their state's duties in the struggle against terrorism. The last category (miscellaneous) groups NRCs which were used at least four times in the analysed period but not as often as the ones listed above, and includes conceptions such as: supporter of nuclear non-proliferation or advocate of states' sovereignty.

Changes in Russia's national role conceptions

The below section presents how NRCs used by the Russian leadership changed throughout the crisis in Georgia. The analysed period was divided into three phases to examine whether developments in Georgia influenced the leadership perceptions of Russia's roles and to compare these possible shifts with the changing perceptions in the subsequent upheavals, which the study deals with. The first phase covers the time leading to the Rose Revolution. The second period includes major protests in Tbilisi, Shevardnadze's removal from power and the election of Saakashvili as a new president, while the third one mainly covers the Adjaran crisis. Due to their salience, the analysis will mainly focus on three most often used NRCs: partner of the West, internal developer and regional mediator, and occasionally will briefly refer to two other important ones: supporter of international cooperation and advocate of anti-terrorist initiatives.

National role conceptions before the Rose Revolution

In the time leading to the Rose Revolution, Russian decision-makers spoke about different duties and responsibilities of their country and these NRCs were used with similar frequency.

Table 4: Russia's NRCs before the Rose Revolution (10.2003)

National role conception	Frequency (abs.)	Frequency (%)
Partner of the West	6	24%
Supporter of international cooperation	5	20%
Internal developer	4	16%
Supporter of states' sovereignty	4	16%
Advocate of anti-terrorist initiatives	3	12%
Supporter of de-nuclearisation	3	12%

Source: Russian leaders' statements

The **partner of the West** was the most often used NRC in the first analysed period accounting for almost 25% of all coded assertions. Russian leaders saw the benefits of

cooperation with the West in both economic and security matters. For instance, Ivanov (2003a) spoke about the new strategic relationship between Russia and the US and stated that bilateral cooperation could be developed in key areas such as: energy, trade and investment. Putin (2003a) said that in areas such as nuclear non-proliferation or fighting terrorism, Russia and the USA could be something more than partners, they could be 'allies in the full sense of this word'. In a similar tone the leaders spoke about relations with the EU, mentioning Russia's readiness for a genuine and mature partnership and deepened cooperation (Ivanov, 2003b).

In general, in the partnership with the West, Russia wanted to be seen as a reliable and solid partner (see Putin, 2003). In addition, Putin (2003a) stated that 'national interests of Russia and the United States coincide to large extent', something unimaginable five or ten years later. He elaborated saying that stability in the world was impossible without Moscow's cooperation with Washington and that in some areas the importance of the USA for Russia was so great that it was irreplaceable (Putin, 2003a). The significance of partnership with the USA for Russia was also evidenced by the fact that Putin spoke about the need for cooperation in Iraq (Putin, 2003a), despite different positions on this issue and the US unilateral decision about invasion. The Russian President even suggested that UN international forces there could be headed by the US and that Moscow had no antagonisms with the US regarding their military presence in Central Asia (Putin, 2003b) which indicates a high level of trust from Russia. Finally, and more surprisingly, especially from today's perspective, one can also notice in the statements of Russian officials relatively high degree of trust in NATO. For instance, Konstantin Totsky, Russia's permanent representative to NATO, perceived Russia's cooperation with the alliance as an opportunity for improving its security and said that he saw more and more readiness to cooperate from both sides. In his opinion, Putin did not see NATO as a bloc directed against Russia but as an organization with which Russia should cooperate instead of competing (Totsky, 2003).

Closely related to the above role was the NRC **of supporter of international cooperation.** As already mentioned, Russia wanted to cooperate, mainly with the West, in various international issues but most often Russian leaders spoke about cooperation against different threats and challenges which the international community was facing (e.g. Ivanov, 2003c). Ivanov (2003d) emphasised that Russia favoured multilateral mechanisms for dealing with international problems, such as conflicts in the Middle East and their settlements, while Putin (2003c) spoke about the need for 'the widest possible cooperation of all nations' in

fighting common threats, such as insecurity in Afghanistan. Finally, leaders spoke about building world prosperity and security through international cooperation (Ivanov, 2003a).

Third in order of importance was the NRC of **internal developer**. This conception was closely related to the awareness of Russian leaders (especially Putin) of the shortcomings of the Russian state and the need to reduce them so that Russia could join the group of the most developed countries in the world. Indeed, Putin (2003d) explicitly said that Russia should become 'a full member of the community of economically developed countries' but at the same time emphasised that successful economic development would not be possible without more effective Russian state. As such, he spoke about the priority of making 'the state apparatus more attuned to the needs of society, the economy and business' (Putin, 2003d). Furthermore, Putin (2003e) emphasised that to have effective development in Russia, tax, administrative and judicial reforms were required, as was international capital. Last but not least, it is important to emphasise that Russian leaders saw foreign policy as a tool for internal development. For instance, Ivanov (2003a) said that it was crucial for Russia to provide 'external conditions which would reliably guarantee security and prosperity to the Russian citizens and make for the economic and social development' of the country.

Finally, it is worth mentioning the NRC of **advocate of anti-terrorist initiatives** as it was one of the main challenges which Russia faced and at the same time, one of the most important reasons for Moscow's emphasis on partnership with the West. Russia saw itself as an equal partner in fighting against terrorism and was grateful to the US for their harsh position on this issue (Putin, 2003f). Consequently, Russian leaders many times stressed that Russia was a member of the international anti-terrorist coalition (Putin, 2003f, 2003b) and that Russia supported the efforts of the international community in the war on terror (Putin, 2003f).

National role conceptions during the Rose Revolution

Analysing this period, it is important to note that in general, Russian leaders relatively rarely spoke about the Rose Revolution, especially compared with the Five-Day War and the Euromaidan revolution. For instance, Putin for the first time referred to events in Georgia after almost a month of protests. The most often used NRCs after the beginning of the Rose Revolution did not change significantly compared to the first phase. As before, decision-makers most frequently spoke about Russia as a partner of the West and emphasised the need for internal development.

Table 5: Russia's NRCs during the Rose Revolution (11.2003 – 02.2004)

National role conception	Frequency (abs.)	Frequency (%)
Partner of the West	15	38%
Regional mediator	9	23%
Internal developer	5	13%
Proponent of the new security system in Europe	4	10%
Supporter of international law	4	10%
Advocate of anti-terrorist initiatives	3	8%

Source: Russian leaders' statements

However, there was one important difference as Russian leaders began to speak about their state's responsibilities as a **regional mediator.** They mainly used this NRC in reference to the situation in Georgia and the growing tensions between President Shevardnadze and the opposition. Already at the beginning of the crisis, Russian leaders spoke about their readiness to moderate necessary talks and consultations, at the same time ruling out the possibility of Russia's interference in Georgia's internal affairs (Ivanov, 2003f, 2003e). Ivanov himself played a key mediating role in the crisis being in contact with both Georgian authorities and opposition leaders and trying to make these two sides speak to each other. After the successful mediation, he explained that it had been Russia's duty to 'prevent violence, to prevent the issues […] from developing into excesses which would undermine stability in Georgia, the political system of the country and its territorial integrity' (Ivanov, 2003g). As such, during the Rose Revolution Russian leaders perceived their and their state's role in a completely different way than during the 2008 war and the Euromaidan revolution in 2014.

Despite the events in Georgia, the **partner of the West** remained the dominant NRC which indicates that the Rose Revolution did not influence Russia's attitude toward the West. For instance, already after Shevardnadze's resignation and the victory of the pro-Western Saakashvili in the presidential elections, Putin (2004a) described Russian-American relations as built on a solid foundation, assured that the Russian side intended to continue acting in this spirit and explained that such an attitude was shared by Russian public opinion. He also stressed that Russia would do everything it could 'to make yesterday's opponents our [its] partners and to make today's partners our [its] friends and allies', and explained that Russia was constructively working with the USA and the level of mutual trust was rising (Putin, 2004f). Indeed, different statements of Russian leaders show that they had great confidence in the US administration and especially President Bush (e.g. see Ivanov, 2003). Last but not

least, Putin (2003h) spoke about integrating Russia into Western community which indicates that mutual trust with Russia's significant other as well as the emphasis on internal development and partnership with the West resulted in some socialisation processes. In addition, despite mass public protests which led to a change of power in Georgia, the Russian President said that he was 'absolutely convinced that we [Russia] should on no account behave in a way that makes others in the world afraid of us' and emphasised that Russia 'must become part of the modern world, part of the civilised world which would perceive our military muscle as an element of security on the planet' (Putin, 2004g).

The fact that during and after the Rose Revolution the leadership so often spoke about the significance of partnership with the West shows how important these relations were for Russia. In particular Putin's last statements demonstrate how different was Russia's understanding of its role and how much Russia's relations with the USA changed compared with 2008 and 2014. Consequently, it indicates how much influence the significant deterioration of these relations could have on Russia's reactions to future upheavals in the post-Soviet space.

National role conceptions during the crisis in Adjara

The third analysed period spanned from March to May 2004 and covered the Adjaran crisis which consisted of two main upheavals: in March and in May. Despite tensions in Georgia, the NRCs most often used by the Russian leadership remained almost unchanged. Still dominant was the NRC of partner of the West but the internal developer was almost equally popular. As in the first period, Russian leaders frequently spoke about international cooperation and advocated anti-terrorist initiatives.

Table 6: Russia's NRCs during the Adjaran crisis (03-05.2003)

National role conception	Frequency (abs.)	Frequency (%)
Partner of the West	7	28%
Internal developer	6	24%
Supporter of the UN	4	16%
Supporter of international cooperation	3	12%
Regional mediator	3	12%
Advocate of anti-terrorist initiatives	2	8%

Source: Russian leaders' statements

The dominance of the **partner of West** NRC indicates that tensions in Adjara between the pro-Western Saakashvili and pro-Russian Abashidze did not influence Russia's attitude

toward the West. On the contrary, Putin (2004e) said that the development of business and cultural ties with the EU would be a priority of Russian foreign policy (RFP) and even mentioned the need for foreign policy cooperation as Russia and the EU shared 'the same or similar views on many issues' (Putin, 2004i). Consequently, just after taking office as foreign minister, Lavrov (2004a) said that there was 'practically nothing to separate us [Russians] with the Americans […] in the field of the ensuring of security and stability'. Furthermore, Putin (2004e) emphasised that Russia's national and security interests would be defended through bilateral military cooperation with NATO, said that Russia intended to do all it could to ensure the positive development of Russia-NATO relations and talked about strengthening and expanding the Russia-NATO council (Putin, 2004j). These speeches show that ongoing tensions in Georgia did not worsen Russia's relations with the USA and the EU and Russia did not accuse the West of provoking these crises, as it did in 2008 and 2014. In addition, these statements, especially Putin's about NATO, indicate a high degree of trust and a conviction that Russia and the West could overcome the Cold War thinking and jointly maintain security in Europe and in the world. As such, it implies that the change in thinking about Western partners and mutual relations was one of the main factors that determined changes in the perception of roles by Russian leaders and in consequence, influenced shifts in RFP toward Ukraine and Georgia during the future upheavals.

As in the two previous periods the leadership spoke about the need for **internal development**. At a press conference just after the presidential elections, Putin (2004h) said that the main priority for the new term was to ensure economic and social modernisation in order to make Russian people more prosperous. Furthermore, he emphasised that the main objective of RFP was 'not to pursue some kind of imperial ambitions, but to ensure favourable external conditions for Russia's development'(Putin, 2004d). Putin (2004i) also spoke about strengthening Russia's place in the world, but quickly repeated that the main goal was to increase the prosperity of the Russian people. As such, the Rose Revolution did not change Russia's main foreign policy goals, which remained rather internal. Nor did it change Moscow's attitude toward **international cooperation** (e.g. Putin, 2004i) and the common **fight against terrorism** (see Lavrov, 2004b). Finally, during the Adjaran crisis Russian leaders continued to see their state as a **regional mediator** (e.g. Putin, 2004j) and once again this role was successfully performed during negotiations between Tbilisi and Batumi.

The above analysis shows that there were different sources of NRCs used by Russian leaders. The below section divides them into three main levels of analysis: international, domestic and individual, which mainly deals with decision-making processes in RFP.

International level of analysis and partnership with the West

The international and regional contexts before and during the Rose Revolution were much different to those in 2008 and 2014. On the one hand, one could argue that the post-9/11 honeymoon, which saw, among others, Putin personally asking leaders of the Central Asian states to accommodate NATO troops for war in Afghanistan (Vinogradov, 2004), was almost over due to US-Russian disagreements on Iraq and other issues such as the ABM treaty. On the other hand, the level of political trust that was still present in Washington to Russia around 2003 was comparable only to the time of the collapse of Soviet Union (Zobin, 2003). As such, thanks to the post-9/11 rapprochement, the international context was still favourable with both countries demonstrating a pro-cooperative approach. This can be clearly seen in the distribution of Russian NRCs as partner of the West was a dominant role and approximately one-third of these assertions referred directly to the United States. In Ivanov's (2003l) words, the common responsibility for the maintenance of stability in the world was the basis of bilateral relations

Furthermore, after 9/11 both countries strengthened anti-terrorist cooperation and, as emphasised by Ivanov, the partnership with Washington in the fight against international terrorism was fundamental for Russia. He explained that both countries had moved from theoretical to practical cooperation which included the exchange of intelligence information and the conduct of joint operations and added that such cooperation presupposed a high level of mutual trust (Ivanov, 2003j). Indeed, this cooperation was so close and the level of trust was so high that it was even possible that NATO soldiers would be present on Russian territory as a part of an agreement on a common fight against international terrorism (Tretyakov, 2004). Russia and NATO had plans to deepen and further develop this cooperation and an agreement was reached to perform some joint military activities on the Russian soil (RFERL, 2003c). Importantly for Russia's status, the perception of partnership in the fight against terrorism was reciprocated by the US side (see RFERL, 2003e). It demonstrates that the mutual trust was much higher and more generally, the level of cooperation was deeper compared with 2008 and, especially 2014.

It is worth noticing that partnership with the USA was so important to Russia that Moscow did not want to undermine it even after such significant misunderstandings as the war in Iraq (Ivanov, 2004a). The Russian side emphasised that tactical differences should not influence strategic partnership, which should be given top priority (Ivanov, 2004b). This mutual trust was also behind Russia's desire and general support for international cooperation (fourth most popular NRC). In addition, Russian leaders often spoke about partnership with the EU and emphasised their willingness to cooperate more closely with the Union (see Ivanov, 2003a). For instance, in his first article written as Russian foreign minister, Lavrov (2004c) said that there was no alternative to RFP aimed at cooperation, policy which left no room for 'imperial ambitions'. This partnership and closer economic cooperation was seen as an indispensable factor in Russia's internal development.

Consequently, I argue that trust toward Western partners and benefits from cooperation with the US and the EU as well as Russian leaders' general understanding of their state's role as partner of the West was crucial in determining Russia's reaction to the Rose Revolution. The positive view of and attitude towards the West contributed to the fact that Russia did not take advantage of the turmoil in Georgia and did not take steps that could stop Tbilisi's rapprochement with the US (including closer military cooperation) and potential membership in NATO, even though Georgian leaders officially spoke about it and Tbilisi's plans had support of Western countries (RFERL, 2003e, 2003f). By the same token, the importance of this partnership influenced Russia's position toward Adjaran crisis as continued support for Abashidze against the central government in Tbilisi could have come between Russia and its Western partners.

The national role conception of a mediator in the regional context

As for the regional context, bilateral Russo-Georgian relations on the eve of the Rose Revolution were poor. However, contrary to 2008 when a similar state of affairs led to the Russian intervention in Georgia, Moscow helped to solve the standoffs during the Rose Revolution. The Kremlin's behaviour during the 2003-04 crisis indicates that one of Russia's aims was stability in Georgia as this country directly bordered with still largely unstable Russian regions in the North Caucasus (see Ivanov 2003k). Indeed, the instability in Georgia could have easily spread to Russian regions increasing tensions there and as such, Russian leaders did everything to prevent such a scenario and helped with negotiations first between Shevardnadze and opposition and then between Saakashvili and Abashidze.

Nevertheless, I contend that such a reaction to the Rose Revolution, apart from the factors described above, would not have been possible without the leadership perception of their state's role as regional mediator. During and just after the Rose Revolution Russia at least three times behaved in accordance to responsibilities arising from this NRC. In general, since the beginning of the crisis, Russian leaders were very careful in their statements and were cautious in their support for Shevardnadze trying not to interfere in the internal affairs of Georgia despite the fact that Shevardnadze had several phone conversations with Putin (see Vignansky and Dubnov, 2003). Understanding of Russia's role as a regional mediator rather than protector of compatriots living abroad also meant that there were no allusions from Russia's side to potential intervention. Russians did not speak about such a scenario despite Saakashvili's statements that he would not hesitate to use the military force to preserve Georgia's territorial integrity (RFERL, 2004d) and concerns expressed by leaders of Adjara and South Ossetia who said that Tbilisi was preparing a military intervention to bring the republics back under the control of the central government (RFERL, 2004f, 2004e). Russian decision-makers did not mention potential intervention even after Abashidze's appeal in which he urged the international community, and Russia in particular, to prevent imminent Georgian intervention and violence in Adjara (RFERL, 2004g). Furthermore, Russian leaders did not speak about the recognition of independence of breakaway republics or their accession to the Russian Federation, despite such appeals from South Ossetia (Rossiiskaya gazeta, 2003). As such, Moscow did not use an excuse to intervene at the request of regional leaders as it did in 2014 when Putin favourably responded to the Crimean Prime Minister's appeal (RIA, 2014).

On the contrary, Russia tried to mediate between Georgia and its breakaway republic from the beginning of the Adjaran crisis. Russia's first attempts of mediation appeared already in March 2003 when Moscow's mayor Yuri Luzhkov was authorized by Russian authorities to negotiate an agreement between Tbilisi and Batumi (Vignansky and Dubnov, 2004a). At the same time, the Kremlin made it clear several times that Russian soldiers based in Batumi would not intervene in support of Abashidze (RFERL, 2004h) which weakened his position and left Saakashvili the winner of the confrontation. Russia again mediated between Batumi and Tbilisi when the tensions reached the highest point in May 2004. According to the Russian daily Kommersant, Ivanov made efforts to prevent Adjaran leader from making any unexpected decisions, such as declaring the republic's independence from Georgia (Sysoyev, 2003). It is worth noting that Ivanov was sent to Georgia by Putin at Saakashvili's

request (Vignansky and Dubnov, 2004b), who also asked the Russian President to grant Abashidze political asylum in Russia (Sysoyev, 2004). As such, helping to solve the crisis and refraining from any actions, Russia reacted in a much different way than in comparable situations in 2008 and 2014.

The role theoretical analysis of the above events demonstrates that Russian leaders understood their state's regional duties in a different way than during the Five-Day War and the Euromaidan Revolution. Rather than about protection of their compatriots, they spoke about the preservation of Georgia's territorial integrity (see RFERL, 2004l, 2004m). Consequently, this different perception of Russia's roles influenced the leadership assessment of the Rose Revolution, which contrary to similar situations in the future, was not perceived as a huge crisis. For instance, Ivanov did not consider events in Tbilisi as an attempted coup d'état (Gordiyenko, 2003) and said that Russia was satisfied with the end result of the Georgian crisis (Sysoyev, 2003). Likewise, Putin said that 'the change of regime in the republic was the logical outcome of a series of systemic mistakes that the country's former leadership made in foreign, domestic and economic policy' (Sysoyev, 2003). Such statements were confirmed by Russia's de facto recognition of the new Georgian leadership a month after the Rose Revolution, when Putin received acting President Burjanadze at the Kremlin (Dubnov, 2003), a move that was unthinkable ten years later during the Euromaidan revolution.

Last but not least, connecting the above arguments it is important to note that the salience of the partnership with the West also contributed to Russia's behaviour as a regional mediator, which indicates different power relationships between these NRCs, which can be divided into master and auxiliary roles (see Thies, 2013; Breuning and Pechenina, 2019). The Kremlin was aware that any attempts to take advantage of the turmoil in Georgia (like in 2008 or 2014) would have led to the deterioration of Russia's relations with the West. On the contrary, Russia's behaviour as a mediator could have been appreciated in Western capitals and this is exactly what happened, as President Bush expressed his gratitude to Moscow for helping to prevent bloodshed in Georgia (RFERL, 2003c). That said, the performance of the mediator role was also facilitated by the pro-cooperative attitude of the new Georgian leadership.

The new Georgian leadership

As already mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, the Kremlin regretted little when Shevardnadze lost power during the Rose Revolution (see Suchkov, 2018, p. 318).

Consequently, it is worth noting that although Saakashvili, Zhvania and Burjanadze pushed for his resignation, all of them had been members of Shevardnadze's party in the 1990s (Stent, 2014, p. 105). All of them had also held some key position within the previous regime. Saakashvili had been a Minister of Justice while Zhvania and Burjanadze consecutively served as a Speaker of Parliament. As such, similarly to the leaders of the Orange Revolution, they were part of the elites, were not anonymous to the Kremlin and Moscow knew what to expect from them. This is a significant difference compared to the Euromaidan revolution, when politicians less known to the Kremlin and more unpredictable led the protests.

Furthermore, the new Georgian leadership presented a pragmatic and pro-cooperative attitude toward Moscow during the Rose Revolution. Despite being pro-Western, the new leaders agreed that Georgia should not be in a hurry to join NATO (Gahrton, 2010, p. 125). They also promised to respect Russia's interests and not to host US military bases on Georgian territory (RFERL, 2004k, 2004j). Saakashvili also pledged tougher actions against Chechen fighters in the Pankisi Gorge (Toal, 2017, p. 114) and in general, Georgian leaders spoke about the need for closer relations with Russia (see Saakashvili in Lambroschini, 2004; Burjanadze in Sysoyev, 2003). In addition, the new leadership made some initial friendly moves toward Russia, for example, Saakashvili made his first trip as president to Moscow and proposed a pipeline from Russia to the Mediterranean through Georgian territory (Gahrton, 2010, p. 127). On the other hand, it is worth noting that Saakashvili after taking power continued talks with NATO and already in April 2004, made it clear that his country wanted to join the EU (Tsygankov and Tarver-Wahlquist, 2009, p. 310).

Nevertheless, all the pro-cooperative gestures did not go unnoticed in Moscow. Ivanov (2003n) said that Russia welcomed the new leadership readiness to 'engage in constructive talks on the problems' which had complicated bilateral relations, while Putin (2004k) stated that Russia noticed 'very positive signals aimed at reviving Georgian-Russian relations'. Overall, the pro-cooperative signals sent by Georgian leaders were noticed and reciprocated by the Kremlin, which could have contributed to the salience of regional mediator role, lack of assertive NRCs and aggressive reaction, and instead, to attempts to co-opt Saakashvili, a strategy which was repeated one year later with the leaders of the Orange Revolution (for more about attempts to co-opt Yushchenko see Tsygankov, 2006, p. 160). However, even more important than the domestic situation in Georgia was the internal context in Russia.

Domestic level of analysis and internal development

The Rose Revolution coincided with a period of sustained and strong economic growth in Russia, which began in 1999 after the severe economic crisis of 1998. However, despite an improving economic situation, Russian leaders constantly talked about the need for internal development which is evidenced by the internal developer being the second most-often used NRC in the analysed period. The necessity of internal development was so often emphasised by the leaders, especially president Putin, because of their awareness of the ineffectiveness of the state and the risks related to high influence of fluctuating oil prices on the Russian economy (Putin, 2003d; see also Robinson, 2018, p. 214). For instance, Putin (2003a) was openly saying that Russia was not a rich country and this self-perception was much different than in 2008 when Russian decision-makers kept talking about the state's increasing power. When speaking about internal development, the Russian President meant a variety of issues, such as the reduction of poverty and crime rates, increase of people's prosperity, and improvement of education and health system. As such, Putin (2004i) argued, RFP should be 'adequate to the goals and scope of the new stage of development', which meant using foreign policy for the realisation of more important national tasks, mainly related to economy and development.

The above statements indicate that the decision-makers were mainly focused on internal issues, especially those related to development and modernisation, rather than international ones. Indeed, Russian leaders several times emphasised that the main aim of foreign policy was to ensure favourable external conditions for internal development. In addition, when asked about the main threats for Russia, Putin (2003i) clearly answered that it was the slowdown of economic growth in the country because without that, Russia would 'fall behind in all the other areas'. In his election-night comments Putin (2004h) again emphasised that the main objective of RFP was not to pursue imperial ambitions but to ensure favourable external conditions for Russia's development. Why did Russian leaders, especially President Putin, instead of focusing on international issues, constantly speak about internal development and reforms which needed to be undertaken despite the fact that Russia was already recovering and economic situation was getting better? According to Stanislav Belkovskii, there were objective factors behind Putin's policy, such as the continuous decay of the country's infrastructure and bad social conditions (RFERL, 2004l). Furthermore, Putin's experience in the St Petersburg city council, where he personally encountered many problems digesting Russian post-Soviet economy and saw general fragility

of the Russian state, led to his understanding of Russia's economic weakness and in consequence, to his emphasis on economic issues, rather than ideology, in foreign policy (Charap, 2004, p. 56-60). Indeed, as the above statements demonstrate, at the end of his first term Putin subordinated foreign policy to Russia's economic modernisation. However, what is crucial in this emphasis on internal development is the fact that in order to pursue Russia's domestic modernisation Putin needed cooperation with the West and Western investments in Russia. Putin himself said that without integration into international economic structures 'we simply can't raise ourselves to the level of economic and social progress, which developed countries have achieved' (Putin in Charap, 2004). As such, this was one of the key factors behind the Russian leadership's emphasis on the partnership with the EU and the USA which once again indicates hierarchical character of different NRCs and an overarching character of the conception of internal developer.

Consequently, neither of the most important NRCs was compatible with an aggressive reaction to the Rose Revolution and as such, the salience of internal development combined with Moscow's focus on partnership with the West contributed to Russia's non-aggressive reaction to the events in Georgia. It is worth mentioning that Russia reacted in this way and did not condemn the Rose Revolution and mass protests despite upcoming parliamentary elections in Russia. It indicates that the Kremlin felt very strong internally and did not consider the Rose Revolution as a threat to the domestic situation, contrary to the Orange and especially Euromaidan revolutions in Ukraine. This confidence of the regime and its very strong legitimacy resulted not only from the recovering economy (despite structural weaknesses mentioned above) but also from the effect of freshness of the new president and especially, from the general stability in the country. The last factor seems to be especially crucial as the chaos of the 1990s and the economic disaster of 1998 were still alive in people's minds, contrary to 2008, and above all 2014 when these memories were more distant. Indeed, in 2003-04 Putin kept reminding Russian society about successes achieved during his time in power. He spoke about restoring constitutional law and order in the state and about economic achievements, emphasising GDP growth by almost 30%, decreasing unemployment and three-fold decrease of inflation rate. Furthermore, he juxtaposed these successes with failures of the Yeltsin's era, saying that 'dangerous processes of degradation in state power, weakening of the army, the collapse of law-enforcement bodies and other power structures' had been stopped (Putin, 2004n). All of these factors led to a broad support for President and his policies among the Russian public.

Public opinion and vertical contestation

On the eve of the Rose Revolution, President Putin had very high approval ratings (75%) (Levada, 2003a). This indicator was even better in mid-November 2003 when it increased to 82% (Levada, 2003b). Furthermore, 72% of Russians believed that in the previous year Putin had quickly strengthened Russia's position in the world (Levada, 2003c). These results show that the President's position during the Rose Revolution was much different than that in 2013/2014 when his public support was at a historical low (Gutterman, 2013), implications of which are discussed in chapter 8 that compares Russia's reactions to the upheavals.

General moods of the Russian public

According to an opinion poll conducted in December 2003, that is already after President Shevardnadze had been removed from power, 43% of respondents wanted to see Russia as a great power that other countries respected and feared, but 54% as a country with a high standard of living, even if not one of the most powerful in the world (Levada, 2004a). Furthermore, 70% of Russians were in favour of strengthening mutually beneficial ties with Western countries, while only 16% were in favour of distancing from the West. In addition, Russians considered the improvement of relations between their country and the West as Putin's great and indisputable success (Levada, 2004b) and according to Levada Center (2004c), a high assessment of Putin's foreign policy was connected with the inclination towards the predominantly pro-European policy. These results are notable and point to two important conclusions. First, Russians preferred their country to be a modern state with high standards of living, rather than an international superpower. These public preferences were reflected in many speeches of Russian leaders who numerous times emphasised the importance of internal development and kept saying that the main aim of RFP was to guarantee favourable external conditions for Russia's growth. As such, one could argue that Russian society supported the NRC of internal developer. Second and more important, a huge majority of Russians were in favour of strengthening ties with Western countries and were satisfied with Russia's rapprochement with the West. Consequently, it implies that a vast majority of Russians supported the dominant NRC of partner of the West.

In general, at the time of the Rose Revolution, the Russian public was not only in favour of stronger ties with Western partners but also had very positive attitude and trust toward the West. 59% of respondent were positive about the USA and 72% about the EU (Levada, 2004a). These results are significantly different from those from 2008 and 2014 when public opinion was much more negative about Western countries, especially the USA. Interestingly,

so many Russians a had favourable opinion about the US despite the fact that only 9% of them positively viewed the presence of American forces in Iraq, while 74% were against it (Levada, 2004a). As such, the opinions of Russian society closely matched those of decision-makers. Consequently, one could argue that the Russian leadership was aware of the public moods and pursued foreign policy that was roughly in line with public expectations or at least was not against them. Indeed, Ivanov (2003j) said that a 'considerable portion of Russian society supports the foreign policy line [aimed at cooperation] which our country has been pursuing in the last few years'. Ivanov (2003k) also stressed that Putin's foreign policy enjoyed the growing trust of the Russian society and that there was a broad social consensus in Russia regarding the state's international priorities and interests, the most important of which was to 'establish the most favorable external conditions for ensuring the reliable security and sustained economic and social development of the country'. However, it is important to note that despite generally favourable attitudes toward the West, 58% of Russians considered NATO to be an aggressive organization (Interfax, 2004). Nevertheless, despite the public's not too positive view of NATO the Kremlin worked toward closer cooperation with the alliance. It indicates that when issues are not of crucial importance to the public or when Russians are not unanimous in their assessments (like in case of Crimea in 2014), public opinion is not a key factor in foreign policy decision-making processes.

Russian public opinion and the Rose Revolution

After the mass protests in Georgia, 56% of Russians had positive attitude toward this country. Remarkably, this indicator increased from 51% in October 2003 and 39% in October 2002 (Levada, 2003d) which indicates that the initial reaction of the Russian public to the Rose Revolution was positive (for similar conclusions see Gahrton, 2010). As such, it implies that any assertive and especially military actions toward Georgia in response to the Revolution could not have been well perceived by the public and might have been risky for the Kremlin. In addition, the relative majority of Russians had no special feelings about ousting Shevardnadze from power and interestingly, there were more people who were satisfied with such developments (31%) than those who felt anxiety or indignation (15%) (Levada, 2003d). More importantly, 45% of respondents believed that change of power would bring positive consequences for Georgia and only 20% that it would bring negative ones. Consequently, 39% of Russians believed that this change of power would be positive for their country, while only 20% that it would be negative (Levada, 2003d). These opinion polls suggest that Russians were either neutral or positive about changes in Georgia and the

Kremlin's attempts to stop these processes might have been negatively received by the public. It is important to remember that there were upcoming parliamentary elections in Russia in December 2003 so the regime paid attention to its popularity and was not willing to make unpopular decisions which indicates the importance of the elections and more generally, of the parliament in Russia.

Finally, when asked about sympathies in the conflict between Georgia and Adjara, the majority of Russians did not favour either side (55%), while only 10% supported Georgia and 19% Adjara (Levada, 2004d). Consequently, speaking about Russia's role in the crisis, 6% said that Moscow should support the Georgian authorities in restoring order in Adjara, 13% that Russia should help the authorities of Adjara to maintain the autonomous status of their republic and 66% of respondents said that Moscow should not interfere in the conflict (Levada, 2004d). As such, Russians sent a clear signal to their authorities against any decisive, military actions in Adjara. Furthermore, as Russian society did not want their country to support either side of the conflict, it can be argued that the public was supportive of the mediator role. Once again, these opinions were much different from those during the upheavals in 2008 in 2013/14 when the Russian public clearly sympathised with breakaway republics in Georgia and Ukraine.

From the above analysis of public opinion polls several important points emerge. First, President Putin was at the height of his popularity and Russians supported his international agenda, so he did not need any risky foreign policy actions to bolster his popularity as was the case during the Euromaidan revolution. Second, it is difficult to track support for particular NRCs in the above opinion polls but some general trends can be found. From the above surveys one can infer that Russians were in favour of two NRCs which were most often used by the leaders: partner of the West and internal developer. Furthermore, the neutral attitude of most Russians towards both sides of the conflict could have been one of the factors that influenced lack of decisive actions and performance of a mediator role by Russia. Third, during the Rose Revolution Russian public opinion was much more positive about cooperation with the West than in the future. Consequently, Russians were also more positive about Georgia and developments in this country, especially compared with opinion polls from 2008 when there were strong anti-Georgian and anti-Saakashvili sentiments. Finally, the analysis indicates that the Russian leadership was well aware of public preferences (see Ivanov's statements above) and that the Kremlin pursued a foreign policy that was roughly in line with the moods and expectations of public opinion, unless public

preferences were not explicit as in the case of NATO. Consequently, with generally positive attitude toward Georgia and the Rose Revolution among Russian society, the Kremlin did not take any actions against the Georgian opposition and in support of Shevardnadze as they could have been risky from a domestic perspective, especially during the election campaign when such decisions could have been contested by opposition parties.

Horizontal contestation

The below section examines statements delivered by opposition and intellectuals in order to examine how Russian elites perceived their state's roles in the international arena during the Rose Revolution and whether they contested the NRCs dominant among the leadership.

Pro-western and pro-cooperative attitudes

During the Rose Revolution the general mood of Russian elites was still in favour of cooperation with the West. For instance, few participants of the Annual Council on Foreign and Defence Policy disputed that Russia's future laid in 'integration with - not isolation from - the West' (McGregor, 2004). However, despite this consensus, the participants were not sure what role Russia should play in the international arena. Sergei Karaganov's statement that 'the role Russia should play in the world remains murky' is a case in point (Karaganov in McGregor, 2004). That said, there was general agreement that Russia should be more active in the CIS and that RFP should be an extension of its internal economic priorities (McGregor, 2004). In addition, Vladimir Lukin, Duma Deputy Speaker, said that Moscow should work toward a 'selective partnership' with Washington and in general, 'should focus its foreign-policy efforts on bolstering ties with the entire North Atlantic community' (RFERL, 2003g). Consequently, leading political scientists, such as Karaganov and Gleb Pavlovsky, advocated Russia's 'strategic union' with the USA, stating that such a strategic partnership was not only desirable, but possible and the majority of them supported Putin's plans of using US resources for Russia's development (RFERL, 2003g). Finally, even a leader of nationalist Rodina party, Rogozin, considered the USA as 'Russia's main partner in the areas of global security and stability, combating weapons proliferation, and regulating regional conflicts' (RFERL, 2003h). These opinions were largely in line with the leadership views on Russia's roles as they also mainly spoke about cooperation with the West and foreign policy as a tool that should serve domestic development and as such, might facilitate the enactment of dominant NRCs.

A significant part of the elite also supported the Kremlin's policy towards Georgia. For instance, Mikhail Margelov, Chairman of the Federation Council International Relations Committee, said that Russia should support the territorial integrity of Georgia and oppose any kind of disintegration of this country (RFERL, 2003a). Boris Nemtsov, a leader of the Union of Rightist Forces, agreed and said that President Shevardnadze's decision about resignation was right and wise as it prevented chaos and bloodshed in the country (RFERL, 2003a). Furthermore, Russian elites were ready to cooperate with the new Georgian leadership. Just after Shevardnadze's resignation, Sergei Prikhodko, the Presidential foreign affairs adviser, assured that Russia would work with new authorities and added that the new president would be selected in Georgia, not in Moscow (RFERL, 2003i). These statements demonstrate completely different attitude than in 2014 when the vast majority of Russian elites did not recognise the new Ukrainian leadership and indicate support for non-assertive NRCs and non-interference in Georgia's affairs.

Pro-isolationist and imperialist attitudes

However, not all members of the Russian elite agreed with the above views on RFP course, its cooperation with the West and policy toward Georgia. In particular, the Defence Minister and one of the closest allies of Putin, Sergei Ivanov, presented a different approach from the official one toward partnership with the West and the US in particular saying that Moscow and Washington were not allies (RFERL, 2003l). Viktor Ozerov (in Lebedev, 2004), head of the Federation Council Defence and Security Committee, argued that Russia was losing Georgia and the Baltics to the West and NATO and as such, it should look for allies in a different area, for example, in 'allied relationship with China and India'. In addition, speaking in the context of NATO enlargement to the Baltic countries, Rogozin (in Lebedev, 2004) said that Russia would need to strengthen the military presence in Kaliningrad and concern itself 'not with a special economic zone, but with a special military zone'.

As for Russia's position in the post-Soviet space, there were some voices calling for much more active role or even for restoration of the Soviet Union. Sergei Shoigu, United Russia leader, said that he hoped to 'see the day when we have one big country within the borders of the [former] Soviet Union' (RFERL, 2003i), while ex-KGB Chairman Vladimir Kruchkov stated that the restoration of the USSR was the top priority for Russia explaining that without that Russia had no future at all (RFERL, 2003i). Furthermore, the National Strategy Council Director, Stanislav Belkovskii urged Putin to announce that Russia should dominate the entire post-Soviet area as this was the only way for the country to prosper in

the 21st century. He argued that it was Russia's 'historical-geographical area' and Moscow should 'invest enormous economic and military means into the restoration and support of pro-Russian elites in the former Soviet republics' (RFERL, 2004a). The above statements about the West and Russia's role in the region indicate support for more assertive NRCs than those dominant among the leadership. Finally, some of Putin's more liberal policies were contested within the circles of power. Dmitry Oreshkin, who was considered to have insider knowledge, emphasised that the President was not omnipotent and could not always pursue the policy he preferred. As such, Oreshkin explained, the siloviki, the bureaucrats, and the senior military commanders were too focused on strengthening the Russian state to allow Putin to act in a liberal way (RFERL, 2004m).

As for the situation in Georgia, members of the Russian elite were shocked with Saakashvili's accession to power and many of them condemned both the use of public protest as a mean of political change and Western support for it (McFaul and Spector, 2010, p. 119). Furthermore, part of the Russian elite regarded the new Georgian leaders as anti-Russian (e.g. see Rogozin in RFERL, 2003b) and expected 'radical and thoughtless' policies from them (see Zatulin in RFERL, 2004f). In general, in the Duma there were forces, among them the Motherland and a faction of United Russia party, which were critical of the Kremlin's response to the events in Georgia and which supported a tougher reaction (Lambroschini, 2004). For instance, Duma Defence Committee Chairman, Viktor Zavarzin said that Russia should increase its military presence in the CIS, in particular in Georgia in order to protect Russia's national and security interests, especially in the light of NATO expansion (RFERL, 2004n). According to Piontkovskii (in Lambroschini, 2004), supporters of Russia's imperialist role and confrontation with the West in Georgia were powerful because they brought together 'elements from Russia's entire political spectrum - from the socialist-inspired Motherland bloc, led by Dmitrii Rogozin, to the pro-market liberal Anatolii Chubais'.

However, forces which were not satisfied with Russia's concessions to Tbilisi and advocated the state to play more assertive role in Georgia and post-Soviet space in general, did not have 'the means to weigh in on [foreign-policy] decision making (Aleksandrov in Lambroschini, 2004). Furthermore, reactions and statements of these forces were incomparably less radical than those of anti-Western and nationalist politicians in 2008 and 2014. Even flamboyant and controversial Vladimir Zhirinovsky restricted himself to accusing Burjanadze, the acting President of Georgia, of 'having an insincere attitude toward Russia' (RFERL, 2003i). The LDPR leader, who in general advocated Russia's harder line abroad (see

RFERL, 2004o), started to present more radical stance when Russian presidential campaign began. He said, for example, that if he became president, he would accept South Ossetia and Abkhazia as parts of the Russian Federation (RFERL, 2003k). However, after Saakashvili's victory, instead of criticising the new Georgian President, as he did in the lead-up to the 2008 war, he preferred to condemn Georgia for Berezovsky's, an oligarch and Putin's opponent, trip there (RFERL, 2004o), which indicates that the Rose Revolution and its consequences were not of primary importance for the Russian opposition.

Likewise, contrary to the upheavals in 2008 and 2014, it is difficult to find radical statements regarding the situation in Adjara, although Russian opposition and commentators were critical of the Kremlin's actions there. For instance, Gennady Zyuganov said that the new Georgian leadership was controlled by Washington and criticised Russia's decisions regarding Adjara and its role of mediator saying that the Kremlin's actions served US rather than Russian interests (RFERL, 2004p). Belkovskii also negatively assessed Russia's reaction saying that by allowing Tbilisi to take back control over Adjara, the Kremlin demonstrated that it had 'neither the strength nor desire to control the situation in the post-Soviet space' (RFERL, 2004q). However, what is important in the context of the future upheavals is that politicians like Zyuganov and Zhirinovsky did not constantly advocate aggressive and unilateral NRCs that could resonate with part of the public, did not propose Russian military intervention, recognition of Adjara's independence or its annexation, and did not call the new Georgian leadership fascist.

To sum up, the analysis of the above statements made by Russian oppositionists and commentators shows that Russian elites were surprised by the developments in Georgia as it was the first event of this type in the post-Soviet space. However, the small number of references to the Rose Revolution implies that they did not consider it as an existential crisis for Russia and its interests which, as in the case of the leadership, may have resulted from their understanding of Russia's international roles. As such, the elites limited themselves to condemning such a form of change of power, especially in the context of the approaching parliamentary elections in Russia, but there were no harsh statements like in 2008 or 2014. Probably the only exception was Zhirinovsky's statement about incorporation of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, but it sounded more like a campaign slogan rather than an appeal to the Russian authorities or contestation of their policies. It is difficult to find explicit references to assertive roles that Russia should play in the international arena in the above statements and despite some contestation of partner of the West NRC as well as voices for more active, even

imperialist role in the CIS, there was rather broad elite consensus on cooperation with the West. Consequently, Russia's reaction to the Rose Revolution was not strongly contested, especially compared with 2008 and 2014 when the elites were definitely less pro-Western and when the stronger nationalist opposition was not satisfied with the Kremlin's decisions, advocated more assertive NRCs and demanded much tougher actions. That said, during the Rose Revolution more interesting discussions and clashes of opinions on Russia's roles took place within the decision-making circles.

Individual level of analysis and changes in Russian power circles

Russia's focus on partnership with the West and on internal development were crucial for its cooperative foreign policy toward Georgia during the Rose Revolution. However, I argue that this attitude (and performance of the two main NRCs) would not have been possible without the presence of many liberal advisers and politicians around Putin. That said, more assertive views among Russian decision-makers were also present and in general, one can notice a kind of duality of approaches to RFP toward Georgia within the Kremlin. As such, the section below shows plurality of opinions existing among the Russian power circles at that time which indicates the lack of elite consensus on foreign policy issues also in non-democratic states.

On the one hand, President Putin supported the territorial integrity of Georgia (RFERL, 2003l), and said that he hoped that the new leadership would do everything 'to restore the traditions of friendship between our two countries', emphasising that there was no other goal for Russia in relations with Tbilisi (Putin in Peuch, 2003). Furthermore, Putin's words were reflected in deeds when he invited to Moscow acting President Burjanadze, actually recognising the new Georgian authorities. A similar approach was presented by Karaganov (2004), an informal foreign policy adviser to Putin, who said that the new leadership should be given a chance and Russia should pursue 'a friendly and rather indulgent policy toward Georgia', explaining that Georgia's stability and territorial integrity is in Russia's interest.

On the other hand, some of the key decision-makers in the Kremlin presented a harsher stance toward Russia's southern neighbour. After the change of power in Tbilisi and presidential elections, Sergei Ivanov accused Georgia of sheltering Chechen rebels. Consequently, he threatened Tbilisi that Russia might withdraw from the CFE Treaty and could stop withdrawing its troops from Georgia (Mankoff, 2009, p. 257), adding that Moscow would need more than ten years to close Russian military bases there (Lambroschini, 2004).

Such statements from the Russian defence minister were not surprising as at the beginning of October 2003 he said that Moscow might carry out a pre-emptive military strike if Russia's security was threatened which in light of the bombing of Pankisi Gorge in 2002 was generally understood as a threat to Georgia (Illarionov, 2009, p. 54). In addition, speaking about the post-Soviet space, Ivanov said that in this area still lived ten millions of Russians, that this region was essential for Russia's security and that Moscow was ready to use military force if unstable situation developed or if there was a threat to Russian citizens or ethnic Russians (RFERL, 2003n, 2003m). Although Ivanov added that he did not see such threats at that time, these statements, especially references to protection of Russian compatriots living in the post-Soviet space, were similar to those that justified the Russian military intervention in 2008 and the annexation of Crimea in 2014.

Furthermore, after the Rose Revolution Moscow intensified its contacts with Georgia's secessionist regions quickly softening visa policy towards Adjara and organising several meetings with their leaders without Tbilisi's consent (Lambroschini, 2004). For instance, Abashidze made five official trips to Moscow since the beginning of the Revolution (Illarionov, 2009, p. 54) which implies that the scenario with Russia's assistance in his removal was not the only one which had been at the table. According to Nezavisimaya gazeta, the meetings with leaders of separatist regions 'focused on the possibility of creating a federal or even a confederal state in Georgia, as well as the prospects for Abkhazia's and South Ossetia's joining the Russian Federation' (Baikova, 2003).

These different approaches resulted from broader disagreements within the circles of power, such as different assessments of Russia's post-09/11 policies (for example, Russian military blamed Putin for increasing US influence in the post-Soviet space, for more see Nygren, 2006) as well as from the tensions between rival clans in the Kremlin which had impact on domestic and foreign policies (Kryshtanovskaya and White, 2005, p. 1074). Indeed, analysts point out that Russia's stance toward Georgia and the Rose Revolution had much to do with behind-the-scenes Kremlin battles (see Lambroschini, 2004).

In the analysed period there were exceptionally many changes in Russian power circles, among others, the departure of Aleksandr Voloshin, chief of the presidential administration who had held this position since the Yeltsin era, in the aftermath of the arrest of Yukos CEO Mikhail Khodorkovsky. The Yukos affair was a divisive issue among the Russian elites and also came between Putin and Prime Minister Mikhail Kasyanov (Smirnov, 2003), who was dismissed in March 2004. Kasyanov's dismissal and appointment of Mikhail Fradkov

as his successor was considered to strengthen the influence of siloviki in the government, especially as with Kasyanov two other liberal politicians left (RFERL, 2004r). In addition, 'Kommersant-Daily' pointed out that there were several Yeltsin-era figures who also lost their positions, such as secretary of the Russian Security Council, Vladimir Rushailo (RFERL, 2004s). Reshuffles made in March 2004 were aimed at overcoming bureaucratic skirmishes and consolidating power in the new presidential administration so that the government would not be able to 'pursue any kind of shadow policy in opposition to the Kremlin, as it was doing earlier' (Pavlovsky in RFERL, 2004s). Pavlovsky, the Kremlin-connected political consultant, explained that Putin created a government that contained no opponents to his policies and due to these changes the cabinet and the presidential administration were unified into a homogeneous government. He also pointed out that Lavrov, new Minister of Foreign Affairs, would 'unwaveringly carry out Putin's foreign-policy course' (RFERL, 2004t). This change of foreign minister was considered as a replacement of one professional diplomat and 'technical' foreign minister by another (Volkhonsky et al., 2004). Nevertheless, it is important to note that Igor Ivanov was widely recognized as one of the 'westernisers' and was credited with normalizing relations with NATO (Volkhonsky et al., 2004) as well as with solving two crises during the Rose Revolution. Finally, the above changes can be seen as an important step in Putin's efforts to consolidate power and move decision-making processes from formal to more informal ones, which was best exemplified by the decision to annex Crimea that was taken by Putin and his most-trusted advisers (see Myers, 2014).

Nevertheless, of all the reshuffles described above, it was Voloshin's resignation that was considered as a symbol of the change of the elite and augmented concerns about the increasing influences of siloviki. Russian analysts described this change as a 'political revolution'(RFERL, 2003j) which could 'move Russia into a new political era' that would be characterised by the breakdown of balance between different groups at the Kremlin (RFERL, 2003o). Voloshin's departure was so important because he was considered to have made numerous important decisions on Putin's behalf, which actually made him the second most powerful politician in Russia (RFERL, 2003p). Furthermore, Voloshin was believed to be one of a few Putin's advisers who understood economics. As such, his departure could have led to less emphasis on internal development and economic issues and stronger position of proponents of more assertive RFP course which contributed to changes in Russia's dominant NRCs and foreign policy behaviour in the future.

As for decision-making processes during the Rose Revolution, Piontkovskii (in Lambroschini, 2004) said that due to Voloshin's resignation 'the Kremlin camp favoring cooperation between Russia and Georgia suffered a blow'. However, although one of the leaders of the more liberal group had left just before the Rose Revolution, members of Voloshin's camp, such as Prikhodko and Vladislav Surkov stayed in the office (RFERL, 2003o). Furthermore, the Ministry of Economic Development was still headed by liberal-minded German Gref who was one of the most influential ministers and as such, internal development remained the Kremlin's priority, at least for some time. Finally, although the elites were split, two-thirds of the Kremlin were still for more cooperative policies (including Putin) while one-third espoused imperialist attitudes (Malashenko in Lambroschini, 2004).

To sum up, despite different visions of Russia's roles and reactions to the situation in Georgia within the Kremlin and departure of people like Voloshin, the presence of a still strong group of more liberal advisers resulted in a continuous dominance of non-assertive NRCs, such as regional mediator and partner of the West, and pro-cooperative attitude toward Georgia, evidenced by Russia's repeated mediation in the most difficult moments.

Conclusions

The relatively small number of statements regarding the Rose Revolution, their tone and the fact that events in Georgia did not significantly influence the distribution of NRCs indicate that it was not seen in Moscow as a major crisis which could threaten Russia's national and security interests. I contend that this understanding resulted from the Russian leadership's perception of their state's roles as a partner of the West and internal developer as well as regional mediator in the second phase of the analysed period. Consequently, Putin's hope for an improved relationship with Georgia under the new leadership in Tbilisi was but only one factor which determined Russia's reaction. As such, I argue that this reaction would not have been possible were it not for the combination of several key factors that influenced the leadership perception of Russia's roles.

The above findings demonstrate that in the examined period the main focus of the authorities was on domestic rather than international issues and foreign policy was treated as a tool to provide favourable external conditions for internal development. Furthermore, the analysis shows that there was a desire among the leadership to continue and even strengthen good relations with the West. Indeed, there was no role change and the NRC of partner of the West was dominant in all three analysed periods which indicates that the Rose

Revolution did not negatively affect Russia's trust and attitude towards Western states. The partnership with the West was important for the Kremlin due to internal development (external investments, Russia's integration into international institutions) and joint fight against terrorism. In addition, Russian leaders strongly supported international cooperation (4th most popular NRC) against other global threats and challenges, such as nuclear non-proliferation, in which the USA, and the West in general, was its main partner. These factors point to the importance of Russia's significant other (the West) and socialisation processes. Indeed, Western plans for closer cooperation with Russia indicate that the West perceived Moscow differently compared to 2008 and 2014. Likewise, statements of the Russian leadership indicate that in the analysed period Russia wanted to be part of Western-led institutions and of the 'Western world' more broadly.

Consequently, due to the dominance of the two NRCs (Western partner and internal developer) and factors described above, Russia not only did not perceive the Rose Revolution as a threat to its interests but also was not willing to take any radical actions which could have worsened its relations with the West and in consequence, negatively impact its plans of internal development. As such, Russia saw its role as a mediator rather than protector of Russian speaking minorities and Adjaran people. Furthermore, all the above NRCs were more or less explicitly supported by the Russian public which had a positive attitude towards the West and Georgia. Interestingly, despite opposition to the partnership with the West and support for more active, even imperialist policies in the CIS, dominant NRCs and Russia's policy towards Georgia were not strongly contested by nationalist opposition, especially compared to their attitudes during the 2008 war and the 2014 Ukraine crisis. As such, although the political system was less authoritarian compared with the future cases, pluralism of opinions among the opposition was smaller and there was less contestation of the Kremlin's international policies. These findings are thought-provoking, they point toward the concept of managed pluralism (Balzer, 2003) and will be developed in further chapters.

Finally, I argue that the performance of these three main NRCs might not have been possible without the still strong representation and position of more liberal advisers in the Kremlin. Many important changes in the power circles that took place in the analysed period did not shift the balance of power enough to cause a role change and a more radical response to the events in Georgia. Furthermore, the more hard-line camp that was growing in strength did not yet have sufficient influence and channels to impact foreign policy decision-making processes. Nevertheless, the changes which took place in the Russian elites had some

important consequences for foreign policy decision-making processes in the longer term. First, they consolidated the presidential administration behind Putin which led to reduced intra-Kremlin contestation in 2008 and its almost complete elimination in 2014. Second, the shifts in the government and presidential administration began to move the balance of power from liberal and pro-Western to more hard-line camp and set the direction of changes in Putin's circle of advisers, which were not without influence on future foreign policy decision-making processes.

To conclude, the above role theoretical analysis contributes to the understanding of RFP in several ways. First, it demonstrates that during the Rose Revolution formal bodies such as foreign ministry and the Presidential Administration played a relatively important role. Furthermore, the analysis focused on domestic role contestation points to the importance of internal divisions and counters an argument about an elite consensus regarding RFP course (e.g. see Mankoff, 2009, p. 5). Indeed, it shows the plurality of views and preferences regarding Russia's international actions in the decision-making circles and points to intra-Kremlin conflicts between different factions, exemplified by two very different approaches toward Georgia. As such, role theory was useful in explaining particular choices among various alternatives. At the same time, the analysis confirms important role of the president in shaping Russia's international actions, who was able to pursue his preferred foreign policy course despite strong opposition from various groups, such as part of the bureaucrats and of the military, who supported much less pro-Western and pro-cooperative direction. Nevertheless, the analysis indicates that Putin was able to push through such a scenario thanks to the still large and strong presence of liberal officials, which points to president's advisers as an important factor in the analysis of RFP.

More broadly, presenting conflicting opinions among the elites on foreign policy course, this research demonstrates that such processes are not unique to democracies. It shows that also in (semi-) authoritarian states foreign policy decisions are the result of negotiations and disputes at national level and indicates that the unitary state assumption rarely reflects the reality, even in non-democracies. Likewise, the study points to the importance of public consensus not only in democracies but also in (semi-) authoritarian states. In addition, the application of role theory and the focus on contestation processes gives more agency to actors than structural theories of IR. As such, the analysis indicates the existence of a predominant leader (see Hermann et al., 2001; Hagan, 2016) who pursues his own vision despite internal disagreements. Furthermore, and related, structural approaches

emphasising the importance of international system (especially neorealism) would expect Russia to take advantage of the upheavals in Georgia rather than assisting the new leadership in Tbilisi. However, the findings demonstrate the role of decision-makers' own beliefs and understanding of the international environment. This points to the importance of leaders' agency and limitations of structural explanations, not only realism but also structural (Wendtian) constructivism. Concurrently, the significance and diversity of external factors (relations with the West, attitude of the Georgian leadership) indicates limitations of liberal approaches.

Consequently, role theory is essential in highlighting how Russian leaders perceived duties and responsibilities of their state during the crisis and how this perception influenced their understanding of the Rose Revolution and determined foreign policy behaviour toward Georgia. As such, it indicates that in the analysed period Russia had NRCs that were successfully performed internationally. Moreover, role theory allows for the examination of interactions of internal and external factors in RFP and offers a convincing explanation which demonstrates how key internal goals and domestic power relations determined RFP behaviour. In addition, by combining different levels of analysis, it demonstrates how different types of factors permeate and emphasises the importance of individuals acting in a specific national and international context for foreign policy decision-making processes. Consequently, the above analysis can also contribute to role theoretical scholarship as it indicates the existence of role contestation processes in decision-making circles in a semi-authoritarian state. Furthermore, it demonstrates links and mutual influences of different NRCs (partner of the West and internal developer) as well as interactions and dependencies between the dominant/master roles (internal developer) and auxiliary ones (regional mediator).

5. The Orange Revolution and Russia's national role conceptions

This chapter analyses national role conceptions (NRCs) used by the Russian leadership and opposition members before and during the Orange Revolution in Ukraine. The analysis includes statements of Russian decision-makers (President Putin, Foreign Minister Lavrov), leaders of parliamentary opposition (Rogozin, Zhirinovsky, Zyuganov), non-parliamentary oppositionists (Nemtsov, Yavlinsky) as well as other members of the Russian elite (including such influential figures as the Defence Minister, Ivanov and the mayor of Moscow, Luzhkov) in the period spanning from July 2004 to the end of February 2005. The first section introduces the Orange Revolution and presents how it is perceived by Russian and Western scholars. The second part briefly describes NRCs that were most frequently used by Russian top decision-makers, while the third one investigates changes in their use. The following part discusses sources of changing NRCs and divides them into three main levels of analysis: international, domestic (including vertical and horizontal role contestation) and individual. The analysis shows that due to terrorist threats at home Russia still valued partnership with the West, with which it jointly fought international terrorism. Despite some contestation processes, the dominance of NRCs emphasising partnership with Western states and the common fight against terrorism to a large extent precluded Russia's more aggressive reaction to the Orange Revolution.

The perception of the Orange Revolution

Although the Orange Revolution in Ukraine was the second of the colour revolutions in the post-Soviet space, it is considered as the most important one, not only due to Ukraine's significance for Russia, but also because of the weight of the presidential elections which triggered it. Already six months before the ballot vote, analysts had pointed out that these elections are crucial to Moscow because Ukraine was the Kremlin's last hope for restoring Russia's domination in the post-Soviet space (RFERL, 2004u)

As Khineyko (2005) demonstrates, the ballot vote in Ukraine as well as the West's involvement in these elections were presented as a zero-sum game in Russian newspapers. Furthermore, Russian media paid a lot of attention to present Viktor Yushchenko not only as the leader of the opposition and the 'right-wing ex-Prime Minister', but also as a 'pro-Western' candidate. Consequently, his victory in the presidential elections would compromise Ukraine's sovereignty and bring it closer to the West at the expense of Russia.

In short, Ukraine was perceived as ‘a crucial battle ground in Russia's struggle with the West over “spheres of influence” in the post-Soviet space' (Khineyko, 2005).

Not only media but also numerous analysts and politicians in Russia saw Ukrainian elections as a geopolitical contest. A member of the Council for Foreign and Defence Policy said that Ukraine was ‘the main battlefield in the geopolitical competition between the United States and Russia’ and explained that Yushchenko’s victory would mean Ukraine’s rapprochement with the USA, which would ultimately lead to Russia’s loss of influence and its geopolitical isolation (RFERL, 2004u). According to Vitalii Tretyakov, a well-known Russian journalist, there was a kind of ‘political war’ between Russia and the West over Ukraine and its future geopolitical orientation (Tretyakov, cited in RFERL, 2004). A project of the Single Economic Space was a factor which raised the geopolitical stakes even higher. It was a regional integration initiative started by Russia in which Ukraine was supposed to be a key member. However, the common understanding in Russia was that in case of Yushchenko’s victory, Ukraine would move closer to NATO instead of choosing integrationist initiatives in the post-Soviet area. Furthermore, the Kremlin was afraid that in such a scenario, Ukraine might become a leader of the pro-Western camp in former Soviet space which would include Georgia, Azerbaijan, and Moldova.

Russia took various steps in relation to the Ukrainian presidential elections in order to avoid the above scenarios. Moscow not only supported the pro-Russian candidate, Viktor Yanukovych with money, but also the Kremlin’s best political consultants were mobilised including Gleb Pavlovsky, Marat Gelman and Sergei Markov. In addition, Russia used various economic and political concessions which were supposed to convince Ukrainian public opinion to vote for Yanukovych, who was the acting prime minister and a member of President Leonid Kuchma’s team (RFERL, 2004u, 2004v; Petrov and Ryabov, 2006). Furthermore, Vladimir Putin himself engaged in the elections. The Russian President travelled twice to Ukraine during the presidential campaign and as Karatnycky (2005; see also Hatton, 2010; Lo, 2015) points out, spent there four days in the week before the first round of elections promoting Yanukovych’s candidacy.

In general, the Orange Revolution and its consequences are widely viewed as Russia’s defeat. Kuzio (2005) writes that Yushchenko’s victory was understood in Moscow as a ‘loss’ of Ukraine and adds that it was difficult for Russia to reconcile itself to this ‘humiliating defeat’ (Kuzio, 2005, pp. 510–511). He is not the only one who uses such a strong language. Petrov and Ryabov (2006) define Russia’s engagement in the Ukrainian elections not only as

a defeat but a 'scandalous humiliation' and write about 'the Kremlin's greatest foreign relations blunder since 1991' (Petrov and Ryabov, 2006, p. 145). Herd (2005) notes that the Orange Revolution and Yanukovych's loss, despite Moscow's support, were portrayed in the Russian media as a 'foreign-policy Waterloo, a "political Stalingrad," Russia's worst foreign-policy defeat in the post-Soviet period' (Herd, 2005, p. 18). Already during the Revolution, Kostikov (in Herd, 2005, p. 18) warned against potential financial, economic, military and demographic consequences for Russia. Finally, Karatnycky (2005), Lipman (2006) and Lo (2015) consider the Orange Revolution not only as a failure of Russian foreign policy (RFP) but also as a personal humiliation for Putin who personally engaged in the campaign and strongly supported Yanukovych.

Others (Fraser, 2008; Saari, 2014) write about a shock for Russian elites. Saari (2014, p. 51) notes that the Orange Revolution, as well as the Georgian Rose Revolution one year earlier, were perceived as signs of Russia's weakening influence in the post-Soviet space. Fraser (2008, p. 165) argues that the Orange Revolution was not understood only as a loss of influence in Ukraine but also as a factor that triggered similar events in Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan and one day might serve as a model for the regime change in Russia.

Although the Orange Revolution is often mentioned along with the Rose and Tulip Revolutions in Georgia and Kyrgyzstan respectively, it had greater significance for Moscow for at least two reasons. Firstly, due to material factors such as Ukraine's large population, trade relations and important geopolitical location (e.g. access to the Black Sea) but also because in the view of many Russians, Ukraine is not a separate state (Levada, 2004e). Such an opinion was also presented by Viktor Chernomyrdin, Russian former prime minister and an ambassador to Ukraine during the Orange Revolution, who said that 'Ukraine and Russia never lived as two sovereign states. Ukraine has never been a sovereign state at all' (Chernomyrdin in Paliy, 2006). In the following sections I examine statements delivered by Russian leaders before and during the Orange Revolution in order to analyse how they perceived Russia's duties and responsibilities in the international arena as the events in Ukraine unfolded.

Russia's national role conceptions during the Orange Revolution

This section present NRCs which were most often used by the Russian leadership before, during and after the Orange Revolution. It shows aggregated NRCs without a division on author or a period when they were used to demonstrate which conceptions were most often

used by Russian leaders throughout the whole crisis and so that they could be compared with dominant NRCs during other analysed upheavals. It is important to note that apart from NRCs which referred to events in Ukraine, the analysis also includes some general ones so that an overall direction of contemporary RFP could be presented. The examination of statements delivered by Russian decision-makers reveals seven NRCs which were regularly used during the Orange Revolution: partner of the West, promoter of international anti-terrorist initiatives, regional mediator, defender of global stability, supporter of international cooperation, guarantor of regional order and advocate of states' sovereignty (see table 6). Most frequently Russian decision-makers spoke about Russia as a partner of the West. This NRCs includes statements which referred to the European Union, the United States of America and NATO and accounts for 26% of all coded assertions, that is those which were used by Russian leaders more than twice during the analysed period. Russian leaders almost equally often spoke about Russia's duties to fight terrorism and create various international anti-terrorist initiatives (22%).

Table 7: Russia's NRCs throughout the whole analysed period (07.2004 – 02.2005)

National role conception	Frequency (abs.)	Frequency (%)
Partner of the West	19	26%
Promoter of international anti-terrorist initiatives	16	22%
Regional mediator	7	9%
Defender of global stability	6	8%
Supporter of international cooperation	5	7%
Guarantor of regional order	5	7%
Advocate of states' sovereignty	5	7%
Miscellaneous	11	15%

Source: Russian leaders' statements

The frequency of use of the remaining NRCs was comparable but significantly lower than that of the two dominant ones. Relatively often Russia was portrayed by its leaders as a mediator in various conflicts and crises in the post-Soviet space. In addition, decision-makers from the Kremlin spoke about Russia's international duties related to global stability and support for various multilateral initiatives as well as about regional responsibilities such as guaranteeing order in the post-Soviet space. Finally, they saw their state as an advocate of states' sovereignty, mainly Ukraine. The last category (miscellaneous) contains NRCs such as supporter of the UN, bridge between civilisations, and supporter of Ukraine which, were

used by Russian leaders on a regular basis but less often than those described above. It is important to note that three NRCs connected to partnership and international cooperation together account for more than half of all statements (54%) related to Russia's duties and responsibilities which indicates how different the direction of RFP was at that time compared to the Five-Day War and especially, the 2014 Ukraine crisis.

Changes in Russia's national role conceptions

The next section demonstrates how NRCs used by the Russian leadership changed with the development of events in Ukraine. The whole analysed period was divided into two phases. The first one overlaps with the time leading to the ballot vote in Ukraine (July – October 2004) while the second starts with the first round of presidential elections and includes such important events as the beginning of protests and repetition of the run-off ballot. Although the Orange Revolution finished at the end of January when Viktor Yushchenko became a new Ukrainian president, the analysed period extends until the end of February in order to include reactions of Russian politicians to the victory and assumption of the office by Yushchenko.

Russia's national role conceptions before the Orange Revolution

The first analysed period extends from July 2004, that is from the beginning of presidential campaign in Ukraine until the first round of the elections which took place at the end of October 2004. In this period Russian leaders did not very often refer to the situation in Ukraine so the majority of NRCs had general character which, however, is useful for the understanding of contemporary course of RFP and for the comparison of changes in dominant role conceptions under the influence of events in Ukraine. Nevertheless, description of conceptions that did not contribute to the understanding of the case study, such as supporter of the UN, was left aside.

Table 8: Russia's NRCs before the Orange Revolution (07-10.2004)

National role conception	Frequency (abs.)	Frequency (%)
Promoter of international anti-terrorist initiatives	13	39%
Partner of the West	7	21%
Supporter of the UN	4	12%
Supporter of international cooperation	3	9%
Defender of global stability	3	9%
Guarantor of regional order	3	9%

Source: Russian leaders' statements

During this period, Russian leaders definitely most often spoke about Russia's responsibility to **promote international anti-terrorist initiatives**. The majority of these statements took place after the Beslan school siege in September 2004. During this terrorist attack in the south of Russia, which lasted three days, terrorists imprisoned more than 1100 hostages, including almost 800 children. The attack ended with the death of more than 330 people (UNICEF, 2006). Although this NRC also had other sources, Putin and Lavrov often referred back to the Beslan tragedy when speaking about the need to strengthen the unity of anti-terrorist coalition (e.g. see Lavrov, 2004). Consequently, the Russian President spoke about destructive and destabilising effects of terrorism for the entire world and emphasised the need for cooperation in order to fight it. However, referring to Western countries, Putin (2004, 2004a) also spoke about the unacceptability of any kind of double standards in the fight against terrorism. He explained that in order to combat enemy, it was crucial to speak the same language and avoid double standards which determined what was and what was not terrorism. Emphasising the importance of eliminating double standards and the rhetoric 'when the same actions by practically the same organisations, but in different parts of the world were declared – depending on the current political situation – to be either terrorist acts or […] a struggle of national liberation movements', Putin (2004a) referred to the West's treatment of Chechen separatists as fighters for independence rather than terrorists. Russian leaders also spoke more generally about the collective responsibility to fight terrorism and about Russia seeing the strengthening of the anti-terrorist coalition as one of the most important tasks of its foreign policy. They also emphasised that Russia stayed in the vanguard of the global-antiterrorist coalition and sought to fully implement provisions of the resolution on extra anti-terror measures as soon as possible (Lavrov, 2004h, 2004g).

The second most often used NRC was that of **partner of the West** which referred both to the EU and the USA. Most often Russian leaders spoke about the partnership in trade and economic issues, emphasising, for example, that the EU was Russia's largest partner in these areas and that this was of vital importance for Russia (Lavrov, 2004f; Putin, 2004q). Lavrov (2004d) also underlined the strategic trust between Russia and the EU and drew attention to the need for concretisation of this 'advanced partnership' in the framework of the four common spaces: economic, domestic security and freedom, external security, and humanitarian. Furthermore, he assured that Russia would like to develop this partnership 'as far as the European Union itself is ready for that' (Lavrov, 2004f). Russian leaders less often spoke about the need for partnership with the USA but discussed different areas of such

cooperation. They emphasised that Russia was not only America's partner, but even ally regarding the fight against terrorism and non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (Putin, 2004q). Lavrov (2004f, 2004e) added that Russia was satisfied with the partnership with Americans which had been developing in questions of safeguarding global security and in common efforts in the struggle against terrorism.

The three following NRCs *supporter of international cooperation, defender of global stability and guarantor of regional order* were equally often used by Russian decision-makers. For instance, Lavrov (2004f, 2004e) several times said that the development of multinational cooperation was a foreign policy priority for Russia. Among areas for which Russia should develop common solutions together with other members of the international community were different threats and challenges, such as spread of weapons of mass destruction, drug trafficking, terrorism or trafficking of people (Lavrov, 2004l; Putin, 2004r). As for the NRC of *defender of global stability*, Lavrov (2004e) explicitly said that Russia 'should be and will be one of the important components of the international security system'. Furthermore, during the Conference on Interaction and Confidence-Building Measures in Asia, it was emphasised that Russia would actively work toward peace and security on the Asian continent in order to increase global stability, security and development (Lavrov, 2004m). Finally, the NRC of *guarantor of regional order* shows that apart from worldwide cooperation on different issues, Russia was also focused on the post-Soviet space. This NRC was used in general as well as in specific terms. For instance, Lavrov (2004i) said that preventing and settling regional conflicts and crises was a priority for Russia. Putin emphasised Russia's responsibility for regional order speaking, among others, about frozen conflicts in the post-Soviet space. He said that Russia would continue to work on the situation in Transnistria in order to restore order there. Furthermore, he stressed that Russia 'is ready to make what contribution it can' to settle conflicts in Abkhazia and South Ossetia in order to secure Georgia's territorial integrity (Putin, 2004s).

From the above analysis one can notice that the majority of NRCs were focused on international cooperation and various multilateral initiatives. These conceptions show Russia's openness and willingness to cooperate, especially with Western partners and demonstrate completely different approach compared to that during the 2014 Ukraine crisis. Furthermore, the examination of statements delivered by Russian leaders shows that in the first analysed period they rarely spoke about Ukraine. Consequently, NRCs used by them were not related to the upcoming elections in this country. This general lack of attention paid

to Ukraine is surprising, as analysts agree that it was one of the most important events in 2004 for Russia, and may indicate that the Kremlin did not anticipate major complications in the upcoming elections and was calm about the victory of the candidate they had supported.

Russia's national role conceptions after the beginning of the Orange Revolution

NRCs used by the Russian leadership in the second analysed period changed compared to the months leading to the elections in Ukraine. First of all, the decision-makers much less often spoke about Russia's duties related to international fight against terrorism. This NRC was expressed by Russian leaders only three times and accounted for 10% of the total. Unexpectedly, partner of the West, which is a rather general NRC was the most frequently used during this period. However, the two following conceptions regional mediator and advocate of states' sovereignty were often used in reference to the crisis in Ukraine. Nevertheless, even combined, these NRCs were used less often than the partner of the West, which indicates the importance of this partnership for Russia. The remaining NRCs: promoter of international anti-terrorist initiatives and defender of global stability were used with the same frequency.

Table 9: Russia's NRCs after the beginning of the Orange Revolution (11.2004 – 02.2005)

National role conception	Frequency (abs.)	Frequency (%)
Partner of the West	12	41%
Regional mediator	6	21%
Advocate of states' sovereignty	5	17%
Promoter of international anti-terrorist initiatives	3	10%
Defender of global stability	3	10%

Source: Russian leaders' statements

The **partner of the West** was used twice as often as the second NRC in order and accounted for more than 40% of the total. As in the first period, using this NRC, Russian policymakers referred to both the EU and the USA but additionally, invoked it speaking about NATO. At the end of January, that is already after the main events of the Orange Revolution, Putin spoke very positively about cooperation with NATO and confirmed that the choice made in favour of dialogue had been a correct one. Putin emphasised that 'as partners' Russia and NATO were 'able to hold frank discussions and work out solutions for settling crisis situations' and that this cooperation had contributed to ensuring global stability (Putin, 2005).

As in the previous period, Russian leaders spoke about the close economic and security partnership with the EU and the USA (Putin, 2004u, 2004t). They also emphasised Russia's readiness and willingness to deepen that partnership. As far as the USA is concerned, Putin spoke not only about the partnership but even about the alliance and about shared responsibilities in arms control and non-proliferation, while Lavrov mentioned struggle against terrorism as an issue where cooperation could be extended (Lavrov, 2004n; Putin, 2004v). Furthermore, Lavrov (2005a, 2005b) added that Russia 'cherish[es]' the partnership with the USA, that this relationship had been growing stronger and that both countries 'cannot afford the luxury of ignoring partner relations for somebody's ideological prejudices or narrow selfish interests' (Lavrov, 2005c). As for the EU, the leaders spoke about moving the cooperation further, about common objective to complete the work on the roadmaps for the Four Common Spaces as well as about common responsibilities and interests that the European continent faced (Lavrov, 2004n, 2005b; Putin, 2004w). Furthermore, answering a question whether Russia seriously takes the EU as a partner, Lavrov said that 'geography, economy, history, culture - all this conditions the necessity of our [Russia's] partnership with the European Union' (Lavrov, 2005b). To sum up, contrary to expectations, during the Orange Revolution Russian leaders not only used this NRC more often but also spoke about greater common responsibilities and future plans of deepening the partnership with the West. It indicates that the events in Ukraine did not, at least initially, negatively impact the importance of this partnership for Russia, unlike during the two subsequent crises.

The second in order of importance, the NRC of **regional mediator***,* was rarely used during the presidential campaign in Ukraine, but accounted for 21% of all conceptions used by Russian leaders during the second analysed period. When using this NRC, Russian decision-makers spoke about Russia's unique position to act as a mediator in the post-Soviet space due to the understanding of complexities of these problems and 'a sincere interest in settling all these conflicts' (Putin, 2004c). On the whole, Putin said that Russia was ready to act as an intermediary in all disputes that had been inherited after the collapse of the Soviet Union (Putin, 2004c). Furthermore, Russian leaders spoke about Russia's role as a facilitator in Georgian-Abkhaz settlement (Lavrov, 2005d), Russia's willingness to act as a mediator and guarantor of potential agreements in the Karabach conflict (Putin, 2004v) as well as about Russia's role as a mediator and readiness to assist in the resolution of situation in Abkhazia and South Ossetia (Lavrov, 2005e). Last but not least, this NRC was used in reference to the Orange Revolution. After his meeting with President Kuchma, Putin said that he was grateful

for high evaluation of Russia's activities in the mediation and emphasised that Russia 'must only play the role of intermediaries' but the Ukrainians must decide for themselves (Putin, 2004x). Appreciation of Russia's mediation by the Ukrainian President as well as the fact that Moscow mediated along with Western states shows that this role was in line with external expectations of Russia and indicates that it was successfully performed.

The NRC of **advocate of states' sovereignty** was not used in the first analysed period but was the third most frequently used conception in the second phase and the one which was often related to the events in Ukraine. At the end of November, that is just after the contested second round of Ukrainian elections, Putin (2004l) said that these elections were the Ukrainian people's affair and other states, including Russia, had no right to interfere. In addition, he emphasised that other actors could act as mediators, but any intervention or pressure was unacceptable because states themselves should decide about their future (Putin, 2004c). Lavrov's (e.g. 2005b) statements were in a similar tone. He emphasised that Russia respected the rights of its neighbours (as well as all other countries) to choose their partners and decide which organisations they want to join. He explained that in response to the proposal of other OSCE members, Russia suggested a text which proclaimed the need to avoid meddling in Ukraine's internal affairs and to respect the sovereignty and territorial integrity of this country as well as the right of its people to decide their own future (Lavrov, 2004o). Finally, the NRC of **promoter of international anti-terrorist initiatives** was used in a similar context but much less frequently than before the beginning of the protests in Kyiv. In the second analysed period Russian leaders said that Russia was being an object of repeated attacks by international terrorists, that strengthening of the international anti-terrorist coalition was seen as a priority by their country and that Russia was ready to cooperate in such coalitions with various partners including the USA and Central Asian states (Lavrov, 2005g, 2005f; Putin, 2004t).

Overall, in the second analysed period one can notice a greater balance between global and regional NRCs, which resulted, inter alia, from the events in Ukraine. Nevertheless, the cooperative international roles still accounted for more than half of all NRCs used by Russian leaders. I argue that it indicates that despite the unsuccessful scenario in Ukraine for Russia, Moscow was not ready to risk relations with the West. On the contrary, the Kremlin still valued the partnership of Western countries and wanted to develop it. Consequently, although Russia was not content with the Ukrainian Supreme Court's decision to re-run the second round of elections (Russia was for the repetition of the whole elections), Moscow

consistently with the NRC of advocate of states' sovereignty accepted this decision. To confirm this position, President Putin said that Russia respected the will of Ukrainian people and was ready to work with any leader (Putin, 2004c). Furthermore, Konstantin Kosachev, chairman of the Duma's foreign affairs committee, said that the Supreme Court was the only institution empowered to make this decision and, therefore, it should be implemented unconditionally (RFERL, 2004c).

Furthermore, consistently with NRC of regional mediator, President Putin expressed Russia's concerns over the risk of dividing Ukraine and stated that Russia was ready to help resolve the crisis in this country (RFERL, 2004c). These words, NRCs expressed by leaders and lack of support for separatists in eastern Ukraine show that Russia, after its backfired attempt to support Yanukovych, did not want to engage in the crisis in any other way than as a mediator who supported territorial integrity of Ukraine. In other words, Russian authorities, like European leaders, tried to de-escalate tensions rather than escalate the situation even further. Similar efforts were also taken by Ukrainian opposition. Yushchenko not only unusually delivered a speech in Russian but also encouraged Ukrainians to acquire a good understanding of the Russian language and explicitly called Russia Ukraine's most important neighbour (RFERL, 2004c). All in all, the reception of the Orange Revolution in Russia was not as one-sided as the perception of the Euromaidan nine years later. For instance, Sergei Baburin, Duma Deputy Speaker said that although as a Russian he supported Yanukovych, as a politician he admired Yushchenko (RFERL, 2004c). Statements of this kind, delivered by leading Russian politicians were unthinkable during the crisis in 2014.

Discussion

During the Orange Revolution Russia's focus was on the electoral campaign rather than situation after the elections. Khineyko (2005, p. 287) writes that there was a consensus in the Russian media (including pro-opposition titles) that Moscow had the right to interfere in the ballot vote in Ukraine. However, I argue, that such a consensus was lacking in Russia regarding more decisive actions during and after the Orange Revolution (see below sections). Somewhat consistently with Khineyko, Wilson (2010, p. 29) writes that compared to its relatively passive role during the Rose Revolution in Georgia in 2003, the Kremlin mobilized 'to do battle to secure a favourable electoral outcome'. Wilson's account as well as other sources (see Schmemann, 2004; Fraser, 2008) suggest that at that time Russia's actions toward Ukrainian elections were considered assertive as Russia strived to secure a favourable

electoral outcome. Interestingly, these analyses often do not discuss other potential ways of interfering, such as support for separatists in eastern regions or the possibility of annexation. Put differently, when one compares Russia's reactions to the upheavals in Ukraine in 2004 and 2014, it seems that Moscow did not take any firm steps in the former case. However, when one compares actions toward Ukraine in 2004 with those toward Georgia in 2003, Russia was more mobilised and much more active, especially before the elections. In other words, in 2004 the Kremlin did its best to secure a favourable outcome but when it did not work, accepted Yushchenko's victory and did not look for any radical solutions which is consistent with the dominant NRCs.

That said, what exactly accounts for Russia's non-confrontational attitude in response to the Orange Revolution? Tsygankov (2009, p. 198) writes that Putin's cautious response to the events in Ukraine 'is a combination of the domestic public attitude, the president's personal convictions, and the West's relatively muted, non-antagonizing behavior after the Orange Revolution'. However, the examination of Russia's NRCs suggests some other important conclusions. First, the dominance of pro-cooperative NRCs implies great importance of relations with the West for the leadership. At the same time, cooperative and pragmatic attitude of the Ukrainian opposition helped Russia to enact these roles. Second, the internal situation in Russia and the threat of terrorism also determined the dominance of less assertive NRCs and emphasis on partnership with the West. Third, foreign policy decision-making processes were hampered by divisions within the regime and support for Yushchenko by some important actors. Finally, it is important to note that the Russian authorities were mostly concerned with domestic consequences of the Orange Revolution, less with external ones.[7]

International level of analysis and importance of relations with the West

After the contested second round of the Ukrainian elections, Lavrov (cited in Cronin, 2004) accused the USA and the EU of interfering in Ukraine's affaires and said that the EU was trying to 'steer the situation in Ukraine away from a legal path' through sympathizing with the street protestors in Kyiv. Likewise, Sergei Yastrzhembsky, Russian envoy to the EU, accused the US of trying to influence and take advantage of the crisis in Ukraine (RFERL, 2004w).

[7] As this factor is rather a long-term one and does not account for the lack of decisive reaction during or just after the Orange Revolution, it is not included in the below analysis. However, it is important for subsequent RFP decisions, that is why it has been signalled here.

Sergei Ivanov (in Herd, 2005, p. 19), Russian Defence Minister, accused the West of the Cold War thinking and said that before the elections 'there had been clear signals that the West would not recognize the ballot results if the wrong candidate won the elections'.

However, such comments were not frequent, and more often Russian leaders spoke about the need for cooperation in solving this and other crises. Furthermore, decision makers in the Kremlin, unlike in 2014, generally refrained from speaking about the situation in Ukraine as a coup d'état orchestrated in Western capitals. In other words, despite disagreements over the situation in Ukraine, Russia still perceived its role as a partner of the West. This conclusion is supported by Russia analysts who write about the significance of these relations and Russia's unwillingness to risk it. For instance, Tsygankov notes that 'Putin was never willing to sacrifice his relations with the West over the crisis in Ukraine, and he did not let his readiness to stand for Russia's strategic interests to be turned into confrontation' (Tsygankov, 2009, p. 199). Fraser points out that relations with the west were so important for Russia at that time that they restrained the leadership's behaviour toward Ukraine during the Orange Revolution (Fraser, 2008).

Consequently, despite Russia's resentment to the West for meddling in the internal affairs of Ukraine, the peaceful resolution of the crisis in this country and pragmatism of Russian leaders allowed Russia to maintain partner relations with the West after the Orange Revolution. The importance of good relations with Western partners and the reluctance to escalate the situation in Ukraine was best illustrated by Putin's decision to accept the Ukrainian Supreme Court's verdict to re-run only the second round of elections (instead of repeating the whole campaign as initially strongly advocated by Russia), a solution which was supported by Western states. In addition, Putin was even able to make a significant step back when he had twice congratulated Yanukovych on his victory in the Ukrainian presidential elections, but a day later admitted that he had been too quick to do to it as not all votes were counted yet (RFERL, 2004x). Subsequently, he also declared that Russia was ready to work with any leader chosen by Ukrainians (Putin, 2004c). These statements as well as the above arguments once again point to the importance of the partner of the West NRC for Russian leaders. They demonstrate that despite the significance of Ukraine for Russia, relations with the West at that time were too important for the Kremlin to risk them for interests in the post-Soviet space.

Situation in Ukraine and pragmatic opposition

Trying to make sense out of Russia's unambiguous support for Yanukovych but rather calm reaction to his defeat and to the Orange Revolution in general, one should not forget about a pragmatic attitude of Ukrainian opposition during and after the presidential elections. Indeed, throughout the campaign Yushchenko several times presented himself as a moderate candidate. First, appealing to the Russian speaking electorate and ensuring that he would not close a single Russian-language school, he managed to neutralise an image which had portrayed him as a nationalist candidate (RFERL, 2004x). Second, Yushchenko (in RFERL, 2004i) presented a balanced position, among others, in the matter of Ukraine's accession to NATO. The leader of Our Ukraine said that this decision could not be made without a nationwide referendum which must have calmed Russia as at that time there was no major support for the accession to NATO in Ukraine. Third, he stated that cooperation with Russia was of strategic interest for Ukraine and presented propositions to deepen relations between the two countries (Yushchenko, cited in RFERL, 2004h, 2005b), which could have helped to dispel fears among Russian authorities. Finally, his first speeches after having been elected as well as a decision to go to Russia for a first foreign trip demonstrated his pragmatism and lack of negative attitude toward a bigger neighbour. These statements and actions show a great contrast compared to the stance of the Euromaidan leaders who presented unilaterally negative attitudes toward Russia. Furthermore, it is important to point to Yushchenko's record as a prime minister of Ukraine. When he held that position in 1999-2001, Yushchenko had very friendly attitude to Russian capital, opened the Ukrainian market for major Russian companies and not only stopped the decline in the bilateral trade, but Russian investment in Ukraine was at that time at its highest (RFERL, 2004c; Karatnycky, 2005; Wilson, 2005). Pragmatic attitude was also presented by another leader of the Orange Revolution, Yulia Tymoshenko. She assured that Russia's strategic interests would not suffer from the new Ukrainian leadership and confirmed that the rights of Russians living in Ukraine would not change. Furthermore, she touched on an important issue of Ukraine's accession to NATO and wrote that Russia and Ukraine should never be in two different alliances which might be hostile to each other (Tymoshenko in RFERL, 2005c).

Consequently, I argue that this pragmatic behaviour and statements emphasising the importance of relations with Russia enabled the enactment of partner of the West role and made it easier for the Kremlin to promote NRCs such as advocate of Ukraine's sovereignty and regional mediator. Indeed, Tymoshenko's and especially Yushchenko's statements did

not escape Putin's attention who just before the re-run of the second round of elections in Ukraine said that Yushchenko, as Yanukovych, was a member of President Kuchma's team and that they had worked together well when Yushchenko had been a prime minister of Ukraine, so he did not see any problems in the potential future cooperation (Putin, 2004z). In addition, after the repeated run-off election and Yushchenko's victory, Putin (2004i) said that he welcomed in Moscow a leader who was trusted by the Ukrainian nation. Finally, the Russian President confirmed his cooperative attitude saying that he hoped that electoral rhetoric in Ukraine would be replaced by a pragmatic attitude and emphasising the importance of economic cooperation between the two countries (Putin in RFERL, 2005c). To sum up, Putin not only did not severe contacts with the new Ukrainian leadership but demonstrated a statist, pragmatic attitude which enabled cooperation and dismissed the threat of more radical solutions. Taking such a position was facilitated by Yushchenko's conciliatory tone which in a way might have helped Putin to save face after his unsuccessful actions during the elections. Finally, the combination of the two factors described above led to the Kremlin's rejection of appeals for interventionist roles and to ignoring the separatist moods in eastern Ukraine (see below).

Looking from the perspective of the annexation of Crimea in 2014, these foreign policy decisions may seem surprising, the more so because also in 2004 the threat of a split in Ukraine was real. At the end of November, the Donetsk Regional Council overwhelmingly voted (155 to 1) for a referendum aimed at introducing constitutional amendments that would change Ukraine into a federal state and give Donetsk Region a status of republic within this federation (RFERL, 2004w). Furthermore, the participants of the congress in Severodonetsk spoke about the coup d'état in Kyiv and warned that they 'reserve themselves the right to "adequate actions and self-defense"' if an 'illegitimate' president came to power (RFERL, 2004z). In addition, there were some direct external appeals for Russia's reaction. In his address to the Russian Duma, Mykola Levchenko, chairman of the Donetsk City Council, urged Russia to react in a more decisive way to the Western interference in Ukraine. When speaking to journalists he used even stronger language saying that 'America and Western Europe are poking their snout into Ukraine, and Russia is afraid even to touch it with its hand' (Levchenko in RFERL, 2004k). Not long after that, the Motherland party proposed a legislation which would enable the former autonomous republics to join the Russian Federation. The Motherland's leader, Dmitry Rogozin, explained that it would help to incorporate the disputed territories in the post-Soviet area (RFERL, 2004ab).

Nevertheless, despite the contested elections, revolution in Kyiv, the final victory of a pro-Western candidate, the presence of influential Russian politicians (e.g. Luzhkov) at the congress and external appeals, Moscow did not support separatist initiatives. Interestingly, on 16th December, the Donetsk Region Council revoked the decision about the referendum, officially justifying it with amendments to the Ukrainian constitution which would increase power of local governments (RFERL, 2004ac). However, it is difficult not to link this decision to the lack of reaction and support from the Russian side as well as Moscow's increasingly moderate attitude toward the Ukrainian opposition and potential presidency of Yushchenko. Looking at (lack of) Russia's reaction to this situation, one can notice that, unlike in 2014, the Kremlin did not speak about a duty to protect Russians and Russian speaking minority living in Ukraine. This is one of the most important differences compared to 2014, when NRC of defender of Russian compatriots was the dominant one. Apart from external factors, there were also important internal ones that prevented the use of such NRCs and determined the dominance of pro-cooperative roles.

Domestic level of analysis and threat of terrorism

Statements of Russian leaders and the popularity of the NRC speaking about support for various international anti-terrorist initiatives point to the seriousness of this problem in Russia at that time and to the willingness of the leadership to address this issue collectively with other states. As already mentioned, the direct reason for the dominance of this NRC in the first analysed period was the terrorist attack on the elementary school in Beslan, which killed many children and which was a shock to the Russians. Nevertheless, by no means it was a first serious terrorist attack at that time as, for instance, in October 2002 terrorists seized a crowded Dubrovka Theatre in Moscow. Problems with terrorism in Russia resulted mainly from the still unresolved situation in Chechnya and for many years, Russian leaders had tried to present Chechen separatism as a terrorist problem. In this context, the attacks of 9/11 created an opportunity to bring Russia's position closer to the West, to frame this issue as a global problem and to join efforts in the fight against international terrorism in which Russia wanted to lead the way. As such, I argue that the terrorist problem was (one of) the most important factors behind the Russian leadership strong emphasis on partnership with the West in the analysed period. As the importance of internal development and Western investments in Russia determined the dominance of NRC of Western partner during the Rose Revolution, now the threat of terrorism was a burning problem for Russian leaders

that pushed them towards cooperation with the West. This indicates some interesting power dynamics between these NRCs in which less popular roles drove the dominant one.

Nevertheless, it does not mean that economic aspects of this partnership ceased to be important. On the contrary, statements of Russian leaders indicate the significance of economic integration and trade relations with the West, especially with the EU. For instance, the project of four common spaces (economic, domestic security and freedom, external security, and humanitarian) aimed at strengthening mutual partnership (Lavrov, 2004i). This indicates the significance of Western investment and deepened economic cooperation with Western states, despite less frequent presentation of Russia's role as internal developer compared to the Rose Revolution. Furthermore, the scope of this project shows that Russia aimed at general development of the EU–Russia Strategic Partnership, not only at closer trade and business cooperation. To sum up, economic cooperation and in particular, the willingness and necessity of common anti-terrorist initiatives were behind the dominance of partner of the West and other non-assertive NRCs which led to Russia's non-aggressive reaction to the Orange Revolution. The following sections analyse whether these dominant NRCs were contested by public opinion and Russian elites.

Public opinion and vertical contestation

It is often said that many Russians view Ukraine as a part of their country. In 2004 this position was confirmed by Levada (2004a) opinion poll in which only 28% of respondents said that Ukraine was a foreign state, while 68% did not see it as such. In the same study, asked about their feelings toward Ukraine, 79% of Russians said that they were good or very good. These attitudes had not changed much since Levada began to ask this question in 1998 (Levada, 2004e). Furthermore, during the Orange Revolution only 18% of respondents believed that Russians, Ukrainians and Belarusians are different nations. For the overwhelming majority of Russians (79%) these were 'three branches of one nation' (Levada, 2004f). The above results demonstrate the unwillingness or inability to perceive Ukraine as an independent state but these feelings did not determine Russians' attitudes toward their state's roles during the Orange Revolution in a significant way

Attitudes towards the events in Ukraine

Although Ukrainian elections were one of the most important events for Russian authorities in 2004, a week before the first round, only 35% of Russians were interested in them (Levada, 2004g). However, after the protests in Kyiv had started, 76% of respondents said that they

followed the events in Ukraine, including 26% who did it attentively, while only 22% did not follow it at all (Levada, 2004e). It shows that the contested second round of elections as well as huge protests in the neighbouring country attracted the attention of Russian public opinion.

Although Russians preferred Yanukovych as a new president of Ukraine (34%; 7% for Yushchenko), they presented rather moderate attitude toward his main rival and the Orange Revolution more generally. Only 35% of respondents expressed concerns that in case of Yushchenko's victory, Ukraine would withdraw from the union and friendship with Russia (Levada, 2004e). It is important to note that although the protests were presented by the Russian media as orchestrated by the West, more Russians considered the events in Kyiv as the power struggle between the economic clans of Ukraine (34%) rather than the intrigues of foreign forces (22%) (Levada, 2004h). Furthermore, despite such portrayal of the revolution in the media, 66% of Russians still had positive attitude toward the US (Levada, 2004f). The Orange Revolution also did not change Russians' attitudes toward Ukraine. In mid-December 2004, that is almost a month after the beginning of demonstrations, 79% of respondents had a positive or very positive attitude toward this country (Levada, 2004h). After the end of the Revolution and Yushchenko's victory, this indicator decreased slightly, but still was very high (74%) (Levada, 2005a). Finally, only 31% of Russians perceived the actions of the Ukrainian opposition unambiguously negatively, while others did not have special feelings about them or even perceived them positively (Levada, 2004h). Consequently, despite Yushchenko's victory in the repeated second round of presidential elections, only less than one-fifth of Russians believed that in the coming years relations between Russia and Ukraine would deteriorate and almost one third that they would develop and improve (Levada, 2005b).

The above results demonstrate that the reception of the Orange Revolution in Ukraine was not unequivocal. Slightly more people perceived these events negatively, but in general, Russian public opinion was divided over these events. More importantly, less than a quarter of Russians thought that their government insufficiently engaged in Ukrainian affairs, while more than a quarter of respondents considered initial RFP actions as interference in the affairs of another state (Levada, 2004h). In addition, only 18% of respondents said that 'autonomisation' or separation of the regions with a predominance of the Russian-speaking population (Crimea, Donbass and other eastern and southern regions) in Ukraine would serve Russia's interests, while as much as 62% said that preservation of the integrity of Ukraine

would be better for Russia (Levada, 2005a). Finally, the public expected the Ukrainian nation (27%) or international mediators from the EU, OSCE and the UN (22%) rather than President Putin to play a primary role in solving the crisis (Levada, 2004h). These opinion polls show that Russians not only did not support more interventionist roles, such as those advocated by Russian nationalists, but were also negative about Russia's interference in the internal affairs of Ukraine, which indicates support for NRCs such as advocate of states' sovereignty and, to a lesser extent, regional mediator.

Furthermore, polls indicate that Russians strongly supported the dominant NRC of partner of the West. Even after the Orange Revolution, as much as 70% of them believed that their country should strengthen relations with Western states. The events in Ukraine also did not change Russians' general positive attitudes toward the West. In January 2005 almost three-quarters of them had positive feelings toward the EU and 61% toward the USA, while only 3% had very negative feelings about the EU and 7% about the USA (Levada, 2005b). This generally positive attitude can explain the balanced views of Russians on the integration of Ukraine with the West as there was not much difference between people who positively assessed Ukraine's rapprochement with the West (36%) and those who perceived it negatively (42%) (Levada, 2005b). Consequently, asked how Ukraine would behave towards Russia in case of its accession to the EU, only 25% of Russians said that it would be more hostile, while 62% answered that Ukraine's attitude toward their country would not change (51%) or would be even more friendly (11%) (Levada, 2005c). Last but not least, two-thirds of Russians thought that their government should seek the establishment of friendly good-neighbourly relations with the new leadership of Ukraine and only 14% said that Russia should question the legitimacy of the elections and call for the cancellation of their results (Levada, 2005a). This is a clear indication of views of the Russian public which might have influenced the Kremlin's position toward President Yushchenko and its reaction to the Orange Revolution.

To sum up, opinion polls demonstrate a generally moderate attitude of Russian public opinion toward the events in the neighbouring country and Ukrainian opposition. Russians had positive attitudes toward Yanukovych but at the same time they were not particularly negative toward Yushchenko. Furthermore, the Russian public had a very positive attitude toward the West, including the USA, despite the portrayal of the Orange Revolution as a proxy between Russia and the West by the Russian media. These results are even more surprising if one compares them to answers to the same question during the Euromaidan

revolution (Levada, 2013c, 2013b). Moreover, at the time of the Orange Revolution only 14% of Russians considered the increasing dependence on the West as a threat (Levada, 2004i), which again suggests that public opinion did not contest Russia's main NRC. On the contrary, it implies public support for the NRC of Western partner and suggests that despite the West's support for the Orange Revolution, this conception might have been advocated by the Russian leadership also due to the public support. That factor combined with moderate perception of the Ukrainian opposition and lack of support for the interventionist roles may account for Russia's mild reaction to the Orange Revolution and lack of interference in Ukrainian affairs after Yushchenko's victory.

Consequently, there was some anxiety about Yushchenko's future policy towards Russia but at the same time, polls demonstrate that the vast majority of Russians believed that the division of Ukraine would be even worse scenario for their country and that, therefore, the Russian authorities should not interfere further and should establish the best possible relations with the new president of Ukraine. These results show that attitudes of the public towards the Orange Revolution were complex. As such, they largely contrasted with those towards the Euromaidan that was clearly perceived in a negative way and in the aftermath of which a large part of Russian public opinion was for the separation of the eastern and southern regions (especially Crimea) from Ukraine (see chapter 7). The above conclusions are supported by Tsygankov (2009, p. 200) who writes that the public played an important role during the Orange Revolution because its unwillingness for further involvement and lack of support for more decisive actions in Ukraine enabled the Kremlin to resist pressure from Russian nationalists who advocated more radical solutions. All in all, the analysis shows that, as with other upheavals, Russian authorities did not act against public opinion. Furthermore, in the second period Russia's dominant NRCs were in line with public expectations. It indicates that public opinion, which did not perceive the Orange Revolution unambiguously negatively and opposed Russia's interference in the internal affairs of Ukraine, could act as an important constraint for more assertive roles and contribute to a change in the Kremlin's position to a more pro-cooperative one toward the new Ukrainian leadership.

Horizontal contestation

The next section analyses some secondary sources as well as statements delivered by various politicians and members of the Russian elite in order to examine how they perceived Russia's duties and responsibilities in the international arena and whether their views on Russia's

roles differed from those presented by the top decision-makers. As sometimes it was difficult to identify role preferences among these actors, the below section also presents general foreign policy contestation among the elites, which were divided over the Ukrainian elections. While the government supported Viktor Yanukovych, liberal opposition backed the 'orange' candidate, Yushchenko. Interestingly, even the Russian parliamentary opposition, usually faithful to the Kremlin, was not unanimous. The Communist Party of the Russian Federation (CPRF) and the Liberal Democratic Party of Russia (LDPR) backed the acting Prime Minister of Ukraine, Yanukovych, while the leader of Rodina party, Rogozin, supported Yushchenko.

Opposition to the Orange Revolution and support for federalisation of Ukraine

Gennady Zyuganov, leader of the CPRF, several times interfered in Ukrainian internal affairs in his support for Yanukovych. He criticised members of Ukraine's parliament for passing a resolution that had called the presidential elections invalid and said that it was not democracy 'when under the pressure of an aggressive mob the parliament adopts decisions trampling upon the expression of the will of the majority of the people'. Zyuganov also criticized Ukrainian communists for supporting 'aggressive ambitions' of Yushchenko (Zyuganov in RFERL, 2004e). Overall, Russian communists not only did not contest RFP, but also cooperated with the Kremlin to secure Yanukovych's victory. As Petrov and Ryabov (2006, p. 157) write, Zyuganov agreed to the Kremlin's request to persuade Petro Symonenko, leader of the Communist Party of Ukraine, to support Yanukovych before the second round of elections. That said, Zyuganov's tone was much softer than during the Euromaidan revolution when he spoke about 'Ukrainian fascists' and advocated more interventionist roles openly supporting Russia's engagement in Ukraine (Zyuganov, 2014b, 2014a).

A similar position was presented by Vladimir Zhirinovsky, leader of the LDPR, and a deputy speaker in the Duma. After the run-off ballot he showed solidarity with 'the majority of Ukrainian citizens who chose their president, Viktor Yanukovych' and with the deputies of the Ukrainian parliament who were supporting him (Zhirinovsky in RFERL, 2004f). Consequently, after the repeated second round Zhirinovsky welcomed Yushchenko's victory in a characteristic way for him and led a demonstration at the Ukrainian embassy in Moscow at which he called Kyiv a Russian city and stated that Ukraine should be run by a Russian governor (Forbrig and Shepherd, 2005, p. 21). Zhirinovsky, in line with the official Kremlin's position, supported Yanukovych and criticised the Ukrainian opposition. Nevertheless, his

attitude and language were much softer than during the 2014 crisis when he explicitly supported annexation of Crimea, proposed Russian intervention in Ukraine and division of this country (Zhirinovsky, 2014a).

Although Zhirinovsky, often considered radical and nationalistic, did not openly contest RFP, there was a group of Russian nationalist intellectuals who presented zero-sum thinking and more radical positions than Russian authorities. Alexander Dugin (in Wilson, 2005, p. 177) argued that the division in Ukraine represented a broader 'clash of civilisations' between Russia and the West and wrote that 'Yushchenko is Washington's stooge and the West is determined to squeeze Russia out of the post-Soviet space' (Dugin in Khineyko, 2005, p. 288). A similar position was presented by Konstantin Zatulin (in Wilson, 2005, p. 177) who claimed that Ukraine without special relations with Russia would be quickly transformed into an anti-Russian actor, like Poland. Consequently, Russian nationalists expected more decisive foreign policy in response to the Orange Revolution and by directly supporting separatism in eastern Ukraine, contested Moscow's foreign policy and NRCs of regional mediator and advocate of states' sovereignty. For instance, nationalist State Duma members and the mayor of Moscow, Luzhkov, visited eastern Ukraine to express their support for regional autonomy (see Tsygankov 2009). The propositions of this kind did not cease with the end of the mass protests in Kyiv. Russian conservative and nationalist analysts, such as Zatulin suggested that Russia should 'back all political movements aimed at decentralization and federalization of Ukraine'. According to Zatulin, this policy would allow to 'thwart consolidation of two parts of Ukraine on the anti-Russian platform' (Zatulin in Torbakov, 2005). Finally, some radical solutions were presented by Russian leading newspapers, such as Izvestiya which suggested that sooner or later Eastern regions of Ukraine would rebel against Yushchenko and Russia would have to intervene. As such, the article argued, it was important to support pro-Russian regions of Eastern Ukraine and Crimea (BBC Monitoring, 2004). The above statements of Russian nationalists show that their strong support for Yanukovych and federalisation of Ukraine resulted from their definitely anti-western attitudes. As such, they did not only oppose the NRC of Western partner, but as they commonly perceived Yushchenko as Western candidate, they also contested NRCs such as advocate of states' sovereignty which in this particular case meant the acceptance of the new Ukrainian leadership.

Liberal opposition and support for Yushchenko

While the majority of the parliamentary opposition supported the Kremlin's foreign policy, Russian liberals unanimously backed Yushchenko and disapproved of Russia's interference in the Ukrainian elections. Grigory Yavlinsky, Yabloko leader, harshly criticised Russian state media coverage of the Orange Revolution and said that behind the Kremlin's support for Yanukovych was not only an attempt to preserve the old system in Ukraine, but also in Russia (Yavlinsky in Schmemann, 2004; RFERL, 2004e). Boris Nemtsov, the former Russian deputy prime minister and leader of the Union of Right Forces, was another member of the democratic opposition who backed the Orange Revolution. He actively supported the Ukrainian opposition taking part in their rallies in Kyiv and contested the Russian leadership policy of support for Yanukovych. According to Nemtsov (2004), Yushchenko's success would mean a victory for democratic forces not only in Ukraine but also in Russia. He also contested a narrative about the Western influence in Ukraine saying that this was a veil that the Russian authorities used to avoid telling the truth about the events in Ukraine (RFERL, 2004ae). Nemtsov, not only openly backed the Ukrainian opposition, but also became part of Yushchenko's team after the victory of the Orange Revolution serving as an economic adviser whose central task was to advance business ties between Ukraine and Russia. This decision was seen by some commentators as a first step toward exporting of the Orange Revolution to Russia. Nemtsov increased such speculations saying, for example, that 'Ukraine's success on the path to European integration is also Russia's success, and their failures are also our failures' (Nemtsov in Ragozin, 2005). He did not hide that in his opinion, the maintenance of the democratic system in Ukraine would be helpful to the Russian opposition (Nemtsov, 2004). Finally, there were some individual cases of opposition to Russia's relations with separatist activists in eastern Ukraine. For instance, Vladimir Ryzhkov, an independent liberal Duma deputy, protested against the invitation to the Russian Duma of Mykola Levchenko, a chairman of the Donetsk City Council and a participant of the congress in Severodonetsk (RFERL, 2004ad).

In addition to Russian liberals, part of Russia's parliamentary opposition also supported Yushchenko. Rogozin revealed his political sympathies when he praised Yushchenko's public condolence after the terrorist attack on the school in Beslan. More importantly, during his stay in Kyiv, Rogozin was wearing an orange scarf – a symbol of the Ukrainian opposition – and began to criticise Russian authorities' policy towards the Ukrainian elections (Global Security, n.d.). Rogozin said that the Kremlin political technologists who worked for

Yanukovych were ‘guilty of creating the wrong image of Russia among Ukrainians’. He accused them of portraying Yushchenko as a Nazi, an anti-Semite, anti-Russian, and pro-American and promised that they would pay for their failures (Eke, 2004). As Horvath (2011) writes, after the events in Ukraine and under the influence of the Orange Revolution, Rogozin decided to replace Rodina’s communist colours with ‘lemon yellow’. Overall, the liberal opposition, especially politicians like Nemtsov and Yavlinsky, was against interference in Ukraine’s affaires and strongly opposed any contacts with pro-separatist forces in Ukraine. It supported Ukrainian opposition and began to present Ukraine as an example of democratic transition. At the same time, as it considered the European course as a natural one for Russia, liberals supported dominant NRCs related to the partnership with the West and various international initiatives. Although in the second part of the Orange Revolution Russian authorities pursued foreign policy which was more convergent with the expectations of the liberal opposition, it is difficult to say that it was a result of their contestation as their position was already relatively weak and, therefore, their public appeal and influence limited.

To conclude, the elite’s attitudes towards the Orange Revolution were complex. On the one hand, the liberal opposition, as well as some influential parliamentary politicians as Rogozin, actively supported the Revolution. Liberals criticised the Kremlin’s interference in Ukrainian affairs and were against imperialist and interventionist roles but backed dominant at that time NRCs, such as partner of the West and supporter of international cooperation. On the other hand, apart from the mayor of Moscow, Luzhkov, Russian nationalists were not particularly active and used moderate language. That said, Luzhkov and some nationalist intellectuals tried to exert pressure on the authorities advocating more active and decisive foreign policy solutions. It shows that during the Orange Revolution there were radical nationalist voices in Russia but contrary to the 2014 crisis, they did not resonate with the public, were less influential and, consequently, did not lead to changes in NRCs dominant among the leadership. Eventually they were silenced by President Putin and his administration. As Tsygankov (2009, p. 198) writes, instead of supporting separatist tendencies, Russian authorities decided to ‘co-opt Yushchenko by mobilizing Russia’s soft power and the two nations’ economic, cultural, and institutional interdependence’. All in all, although liberals contested initial policies pursued by the Kremlin, they generally supported Russia’s dominant NRCs, contrary to nationalists who interfered in Ukraine’s internal affairs and openly promoted federalisation of this country, thus contesting NRCs such as regional mediator and advocate of states’ sovereignty. As such, it demonstrates that during the

Orange Revolution the NRCs advocated by Russian liberals rather than nationalists were closer to those dominant among the leadership. Apart from different visions of Russia's roles and foreign policy among the opposition, there were also some important divisions among actors associated with the Kremlin.

Individual level of analysis and foreign policy decision-making processes

Although the Kremlin, including President Putin, strongly supported Yanukovych in the Ukrainian presidential campaign, there existed different opinions on this subject among Russian policymakers. As Russia analysts (Khineyko, 2005; Wilson, 2005) note, there were various views within the regime and in the media about the most appropriate strategy for the upcoming Ukrainian elections and ranged from proponents of backing exclusively Yanukovych to supporters of a more balanced approach. Furthermore, Wilson (2005, p. 94) points to some support for the opposition candidate among Russian business elite, which was satisfied with Yushchenko's policies when he had been Ukrainian prime minster, as well as among Russian siloviki, even at the very top. As such, a significant part of the Russia elite, including former members of security services and military, considered pragmatic Yushchenko as a better option for their interests than Yanukovych, who was linked to the Donetsk clan.

Interestingly, there were also some disagreements among Putin's close advisers. The majority of them, as the Russian President, supported Yanukovych. However, a liberal Illarionov backed Yushchenko and after his victory said that it would help Russia to rid itself of imperial complexes (RFERL, 2004af). At that time Illarionov was presidential senior economic adviser and previously had worked for Yeltsin's prime minister, Yegor Gaidar. Before and during the Orange Revolution he also had other more important disagreements with the Kremlin, among others, regarding Yukos affair (RFERL, 2004af) and soon after making some uncomfortable comments on it, was removed by Putin from his position as Russia's representative to the G-8 (RFERL, 2005d; Illarionov, 2017). Furthermore, Ryabov and Petrov (2006) point to differences within the Kremlin's 'pro-Yanukovych' camp before the Orange Revolution. They write about Alexander Voloshin's, then Chief of the Presidential Administration, rejection of 'all attempts by Russian political experts associated with the Kremlin to suggest Ukrainian politicians worthy of Moscow's support' and explain that Russia changed its strategy only after Voloshin lost his position. These authors also describe

significant differences among the Kremlin's technologists regarding a strategy for the Ukrainian elections (Petrov and Ryabov, 2006, pp. 146, 162).

Finally, it is important to mention the Russian Orthodox Church (ROC) which at the beginning had backed Yanukovych albeit with some reservations (Petrov and Ryabov, 2006, p. 158). However, the ROC modified its position and tried to keep positive relations not only with Yanukovych but also with Yushchenko which irritated the Kremlin (Petrov and Ryabov, 2006, p. 158). Ivzhenko (2004) writes that after the first round of the elections Yushchenko obtained the blessing of the ROC and that he might be supported by the Russian elite in the second round. Nevertheless, it seems that even if there were such moods among the Russian authorities after the first round, the Kremlin's options were narrowed by its earlier one-sided policy.

However, the contestation processes were bi-directional and various more aggressive solutions were also advocated within the regime after the beginning of the Orange Revolution. Petrov and Ryabov (2006) claim that especially among the siloviki there were serious considerations of supporting Ukrainian leadership in suppressing the protesters, including bringing in troops, and of backing the separatist initiatives in the south-eastern Ukraine which indicates support for more interventionist NRCs than mediator's role advocated by the leadership in the second part of the crisis. Proponents of such solutions were among the most important politicians connected to the regime, such as Luzhkov, the mayor of Moscow and a member of the party of power, United Russia. Luzhkov supported federalisation of Ukraine and even backed secessionist tendencies in eastern part of the country. In November 2004, in the midst of the protests in Kyiv, he took part in the Summit of Councils of Eastern Regions in Severodonetsk where leaders gathered to discuss separatist question. During the congress leaders of south-eastern regions of Ukraine declared that they would never accept Yushchenko as a new president and warned that their regions would break away from Ukraine in case of his victory. The chairman of Donetsk region council, Boris Kolesnikov, even proposed to create 'a new federal state, a south-east republic with its capital in Kharkiv' in case of Yushchenko's victory (Osborn, 2004). Luzhkov himself suggested that the regions of south-eastern Ukraine may prefer to strive for separatism rather than be a part of the new 'Orange' Ukraine. In addition, he praised the congress saying that on the one hand, one can 'see the sabbath of witches who have been fattened up with oranges and who pretend they represent the whole of the nation' while 'on the other hand we see the

peaceful power of constructive forces that has gathered in this hall' (Osborn, 2004; Shopin, 2013).

Such proposals clearly contradicted the main NRCs advocated by the Russian leadership during the Orange Revolution. Firstly, they would have violated Ukraine's sovereignty and compromised Moscow's attempts to play an intermediary role. Secondly, they could have worsened Russia's relationships with the West and hindered its partnership with the USA and the EU. Finally, such actions could have stalled Russia's international anti-terrorist initiatives as well as other cooperative projects advocated by Moscow. Nevertheless, due to Putin's unwillingness to deteriorate relations with the West and still relatively strong liberal faction, the Russian President and his administration resisted nationalist voices within the power circles. Indeed, after big reshuffles in 2003-04, there were no significant changes in the presidential administration and the government before the Orange Revolution. Consequently, there was still relatively big number of liberal advisers, such as German Gref and Illarionov who advocated internal reforms and development that required cooperation with the west. As such, they criticised the Kremlin's interference in Ukrainian affairs and generally opposed assertive foreign policy focused on the restoration of Russia's position in the post-Soviet space.

To sum up, during the Orange Revolution there was relatively large pluralism within Russia's bureaucracy and business circles. As such, the situation somewhat resembled that of the Rose Revolution, when two significantly different scenarios were supported by important members of the power circles. These intra-elite disagreements over an appropriate strategy and personal choices might have paralysed or at least hamper some foreign policy decision-making processes and impacted Russia's reaction to the events in Ukraine. Nevertheless, as in case of the revolution in Georgia in the previous year, less assertive NRCs and more pro-cooperative scenario, supported by Putin and the liberal faction, was eventually adopted.

Conclusions

Russia led a pragmatic foreign policy during the Orange Revolution. Initially Moscow had strongly backed its favourite candidate, Yanukovych. However, after the disputed run-off ballot and the Ukrainian Supreme Court's decision to re-run the final round, the Russian leadership reappraised the direction of the state's foreign policy, softened their support for Yanukovych and took a more diplomatic stance saying that Russia would accept the choice

of Ukrainian people and would work with any elected president. This inconsistent (but at the same time pragmatic) foreign policy might have resulted from contestation within the Kremlin and among the power circles more broadly. These contestation processes mainly concerned policy towards Ukraine, but they also reflected deeper divisions regarding Russia's appropriate role on the international stage. The analysis indicates that disagreements had existed before the presidential campaign in Ukraine, intensified during the elections and might have influenced foreign policy decision-making processes and determined Russia's (lack of) reaction to the Orange Revolution.

In the first analysed period, due to the importance of fighting terrorism after the tragedy in Beslan, Russian leaders strongly emphasised the NRC of promoter of international anti-terrorist initiatives. At that time, Russia had an urgent need to fight terrorism and the West was its natural ally in that struggle, which explains strong and unwavering support for the NRC of partner of the West, despite Western actions in Ukraine and its backing of the Orange Revolution. Overall, looking at the distribution of dominant NRCs and different statements delivered by the decision-makers, one can notice that the Orange Revolution did not change their perception of Russia's international duties and their relatively friendly tone toward the West. In December 2004, that is already after the beginning of mass protests in Kyiv, Putin said that he was optimistic about Russia's future relations with the USA during Bush's second term. Moreover, the Russian President praised Bush saying that the recent progress in the US-Russian relations had been possible thanks to 'the constructive policy pursued by George Bush […] whom we consider to be our [Russia's] reliable partner and ally' (Putin, 2004aa).

The dominance of the partner of the West and other cooperative NRCs as well as lack of significant changes among dominant roles despite the events in Ukraine, demonstrates the importance of relationship with Western states for the Russian leadership. Consequently, the decision-makers saw Russia's regional role as mediator rather than defender of compatriots living in Ukraine. However, the enactment of these NRCs may not have been possible without the support of the liberal faction for them and without a pragmatic attitude of the Ukrainian opposition which underlined the willingness to cooperate with Russia and avoided statements that could have aroused anxiety among the Russian-speaking population in Ukraine. These factors, as well as lack of the public support for further engagement in Ukraine, led to the rejection of radical nationalist propositions and external separatist sentiments by the Kremlin. This combination of various external and internal factors

determined the perception of Russia's duties and responsibilities by its leaders which influenced RFP behaviour during the Orange Revolution.

All in all, the analysis demonstrates pluralism of opinion regarding RFP, both specific decisions and more general roles, which at that time existed in the country, and especially among the power circles. Role theory provides a useful framework that allows to explain why particular decisions are taken despite the existence of numerous alternatives, while the focus on specific NRCs helps to understand what matters to leaders and to make connections between actions and motives (see Özdamar, 2016, p. 103). In addition, the variety of positions advocated by various important players indicates that the formation of RFP depends on different actors, not just the will and whims of the President. Nevertheless, the ability to push for his preferred scenario and to repel nationalist pressures for more radical reaction (which in the analysed case might have been facilitated by the still relative balance of power between different factions in the Kremlin) confirms the President's strong position and influence on the course of foreign policy. As such, as in the case of the Rose Revolution, the analysis points to a predominant leader (Hermann et al., 2001) who pursues his key objectives despite internal opposition. Consequently, Russia's pragmatic behaviour might to a large extent resulted from the President's pragmatism (see Charap, 2004; Dyson and Parent, 2018). Furthermore, the analysis speaks to literature about clientelistic elites in Russia (e.g. see Baturo and Elkink, 2016) as the findings point to the importance of business elites and private interests of the key actors and their influence on RFP. Future research should further address this issue in Russia, and other hybrid regimes.

In addition, the findings demonstrate that even in (semi-) authoritarian states there are numerous foreign policy preferences and actors with different international interests who try to influence foreign policy course which may hamper decision-making processes. It also shows that in hybrid regimes public opinion may be an important factor constraining the leadership room for manoeuvre and, thus shaping (at least to a certain extent) states' foreign policy behaviour. Furthermore, and related, this chapter reveals that not only in democratic states domestic role contestation processes take place and that in (semi-) authoritarian regimes the public and the elites advocate different NRCs that may or may not be in line with those dominant among the leadership. Last but not least, it shows that external crises are an insufficient factor to change the perception of states' international responsibilities and dominant NRCs. More broadly, the role theoretical approach and the analysis of dominant NRCs is useful in explaining Russian decisions that seem inconsistent at first glance. It also

helps to avoid the pitfalls of structural approaches underlying the importance of external factors (particularly realisms) which, as a result of Russia's and the West's support for the two opposing sides in Ukraine, would expect their confrontation and deterioration of mutual relations. The analysis shows how the complex nature of international relations allows leaders to have their own interpretations and ideas about it and as such, challenges neorealist assumption about the decisive influence of the structure on actors' behaviour. At the same time, the findings demonstrate the important role of international factors which emphasises their significance for the analysis of (Russian) foreign policy and points to shortcomings of domestic political explanations.

To conclude, the application of role theory to the analysed case, allows for better understanding of Russia's reaction to the Orange Revolution because it demonstrates that at that time Russian leaders perceived their state's roles as partner of the West which largely precluded any radical reaction to the events in Ukraine. Furthermore, role theory shows how interactions of different external and internal factors determined these perceptions of Russia's international responsibilities which resulted in restrained foreign policy behaviour. Finally, the analysis points to some interesting hierarchical relations between NRCs as it shows that the NRC of advocate of anti-terrorist initiatives was behind the most popular role of partner of the West. Further empirical analysis of similar situations could answer whether in such cases one can speak about master and auxiliary roles or some different mechanisms are at play.

6. The Five-Day War and Russia's national role conceptions

Until the Russian annexation of Crimea, the Five-Day War with Georgia was arguably the worst moment in Russia's relations with the West since the collapse of the Soviet Union. The events of August 2008 changed the status quo in the region and closed, at least for some time, Georgia's chances of joining NATO (see Suchkov, 2018). The war itself, was the last act of long deteriorating Russo-Georgian relations that followed a period of relatively good relations after Saakashvili's ascent to the presidency in January 2004. Writing about the reasons for these worsening relations, Tsygankov and Tarver-Wahlquist (2009, p. 307) list 'Russia's reluctance to reduce its military presence in Georgia, Georgia's increasingly Western leanings and apparent ingratitude for Russian assistance in solving the Adjara crisis, and ultimately Georgian bellicosity toward South Ossetia'. In addition, Lapidus (2007, p. 151) points to other factors, such as Moscow's support for Abkhazia and South Ossetia, while Delcour and Wolczuk (2015, p. 468) write about Russian pressure, mainly economic, on Georgia aiming at disrupting its integration processes with Western countries. The mutual accusations and rising tensions led to the transformation of the frozen conflict into a hot one, Georgian attack on the capital of South Ossetia, Tskhinvali, and Russia's aggressive response. Russian intervention did not stop in South Ossetia and continuing into Georgian territory, Russian troops crossed the border of another state for the first time since the collapse of the Soviet Union. In the aftermath of the Five-Day War, Russia decided to recognise the independence of South Ossetia and Abkhazia.

This chapter analyses Russia's national role conceptions (NRCs) during the Five-Day War in order to answer why Russia intervened in South Ossetia, crossed the Georgian border and after many years of refusals, decided to recognize the independence of the two breakaway republics. The analysis includes statements of Russian decision-makers (President Medvedev, Prime Minister Putin and Foreign Minister Lavrov), leaders of parliamentary opposition (Mironov, Zhirinovsky, Zyuganov), non-parliamentary oppositionists (Kasparov, Nemtsov) as well as members of Russian intelligentsia, such as Dugin and Vishnevskiy in the period spanning from June to September 2008. As the Ministry of Defence was no longer headed by Putin's influential ally, Ivanov, it was largely excluded from the analysis. Likewise, less attention was paid to the Presidential Administration, whose independence diminished since the departure of Voloshin. In the first section I present aggregated NRCs. The second part discusses changes in dominant conceptions. The following sections look closer at sources behind changing NRCs dividing them into three main levels of analysis: international,

domestic including role contestation processes among public opinion and Russian elites, and individual. The chapter demonstrates that there were important changes in the international and domestic situations during the time leading to the conflict which influenced shifts in Russia's dominant NRCs and argues that Russia's self-perception as an increasingly important international player was crucial for the state's redefinition of international duties and responsibilities which resulted in more assertive foreign policy behaviour, exemplified by the intervention in Georgia.

The Five-Day War and Russia's national role conceptions

This section presents NRCs which were most often used by Russian decision-makers from June to September 2008, that is in a period which starts more than a month before the Five-Day War and finishes more than a month after Russia's recognition of South Ossetia and Abkhazia. This section presents aggregated NRCs to show which of them were most often used by Russian leaders throughout the whole crisis so that they could be compared with dominant role conceptions in other examined upheavals. The analysis of leaders' statements reveals six main NRCs (see table 9): defender of Russian compatriots, guarantor of regional order, supporter of international law, supporter of South Ossetian people, promoter of the new security system in Europe and advocate of multi-polar world order.

Table 10: Russia's NRCs throughout the whole crisis (06–09.2008)

National role conception	Frequency (abs.)	Frequency (%)
Defender of Russian compatriots	18	17%
Guarantor of regional order	15	14%
Supporter of international law	13	12%
Supporter of South Ossetians	11	10%
Promoter of the new security system in Europe	11	10%
Advocate of multi-polar world order	7	7%
Miscellaneous	26	30%

Source: Russian leaders' statements

Russian decision-makers most often spoke about the duty to defend compatriots living abroad. This NRC accounts for 17% of all coded assertions. The second and third most frequently used NRCs were: guarantor of regional order and supporter of international law which accounted for 14% and 12% respectively. The leadership also often referred to responsibilities to protect South Ossetian people and to promote the new security system in

Europe. The last category (miscellaneous) includes NRCs which were used in the analysed period at least four times but not as often as the ones listed above.

Changes in Russia's national role conceptions

The next section discusses changes in dominant NRCs in the two analysed periods. The first covers the time leading to the war (June-July 2008), while the second one extends from the beginning of the war, through the recognition of South Ossetia and Abkhazia by Russia, until the end of September 2008, when the greatest emotions associated with the conflict began to slowly fade. Due to their salience, my analysis will focus on four most often used NRCs in both periods.

National role conceptions before the Five-Day War

The analysis of speeches delivered by Russian decision-makers in the first analysed period demonstrates that in the time leading to the war they frequently spoke about global and more regional challenges and Russia's role in preventing them and, consequently, relatively often used NRCs connected to international cooperation.

Table 11: Russia's NRCs before the Five-Day War (06-07.2008)

National role conception	Frequency (abs.)	Frequency (%)
Promoter of the new security system in Europe	6	21%
Supporter of international law	6	21%
Supporter of international cooperation	5	18%
Partner of the West	4	14%
Supporter of the UN	4	14%
Internal developer	3	11%

Source: Russian leaders' statements

The NRC of **promoter of the new security system in Europe** assumed pre-eminence in the first analysed period. This conception resembles policy statements but it was considered as a role because of the nature of leaders' statements, which presented Russia as a supporter of such a system in contrast to other European states, which did not seem to see such a necessity. In addition, Russian decision-makers talked about the need for such a solution for a long time, which indicates a broader and more lasting vision. The use of this NRC resulted from Russia's perception of inapplicability of the Cold War security system to new realities. In Russian leaders' opinion, problems and threats faced by contemporary world were completely different from those of the previous era and, therefore, 'old system of bloc

politics' could not solve them. Consequently, Russia advocated the establishment of a collective security system in Europe which would prevent the creation of new dividing lines and would build a common indivisible security space (Medvedev, 2008a).

Another factor behind this NRC was Russia's perception of US interference in European security issues. For instance, President Medvedev suggested that instead of building subsequent elements of missile defence system, all European nations should work together to create a new security framework and sign a new treaty on European security. Consequently, he explained that if missile defence system was on the agenda, this issue should be addressed together rather than through exclusive contacts with individual states in Europe (Medvedev, 2008b). Medvedev also emphasised that the security of the entire European continent could be neither fragmented into blocs, nor guaranteed by just one country (Medvedev, 2008c). As the above statements demonstrate, it was especially the issue of missile defence system in Eastern Europe that worried Russia and in the opinion of its leaders exacerbated the security situation and created new tensions on the continent. Russians did not believe the assurances that the project was intended to neutralize threats emanating from Iran and perceived it as the projection of US strategic interests into Eastern Europe for the first time in history (see Lavrov, 2008c). As such, Russian leaders kept emphasising that the European security issues, such as the missile defence system or the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe should be addressed collectively. They repetitively pointed out that the main aim was truly indivisible security and specifically proposed to prepare a new Treaty on European Security that could be developed at a European-wide summit (Lavrov, 2008c; Medvedev, 2008c, 2008d).

The second most popular NRC, **supporter of international law,** had rather general character in the first analysed period (e.g. see Lavrov, 2008e). However, some resentment and references to the actions of Western powers can be found among statements using this NRC. For instance, Medvedev said that international law was indispensable for world development and that Russia was committed to it and 'to having all countries, above all the big powers, respect' it (Medvedev, 2008e). In addition, he noticed that in security issues, Russia's approach was based on international law and the use of political rather than forceful solutions (Medvedev, 2008c). This NRC had a rather general character apart from one, but very important issue – the independence of Kosovo. Medvedev (2008e) emphasised that it was crucial to resist the attempts of national interests to ignore international law and invoked the Kosovo case in which, in his opinion, the principles of international law were undermined.

The use of the following NRC, **supporter of international cooperation** resulted from changing nature of international relations, increasing world instability and new threats that had to be faced collectively by the international community. Furthermore, this conception stemmed from Russia's perception of insufficiently developed international cooperation in counteracting challenges faced by the world. Russian leaders spoke about insufficient progress made by the international community since the end of the Cold War and strongly supported a common fight against global challenges (Lavrov, 2008g; Medvedev, 2008b).

Finally, although definitely less often than during the Rose and Orange Revolution, the NRC of **partner of the West** was still employed by Russian decision-makers before the war with Georgia. It was mainly the President who used this conception and he mainly referred to the partnership with the European Union. Medvedev (2008g) explicitly said that his country wanted to have 'stable, full-fledged sustainable relations with the European Union' and that as president, he was ready to do everything in order to expand these contacts. In addition, he spoke about the need for cooperation to counteract threats and challenges facing the world community and about a new agreement between Russia and the EU which would enable the rapprochement of the two parties and would serve as a basis for the long-term strategic partnership (see Medvedev, 2008f). Less often Russian leaders talked about partner relations with the USA and NATO which resulted from NATO enlargement plans. For instance, Medvedev (2008f) warned that if these plans were implemented, they would significantly worsen and perhaps even ruin relations with Russia for a long time.

National role conceptions during and after the Five-Day War

NRCs used by the leadership in the second analysed period, that is during and after the Russo-Georgian war, changed significantly. Russian leaders ceased to speak about Russia's support for international cooperation and about partnership with the West. Instead, they emphasised Russia's duty to defend compatriots living abroad as well as to protect and support South Ossetian people. In addition, and related, they often stressed Russia's responsibility to guarantee regional order.

In the first analysed period the NRC of **defender of Russian compatriots** was almost completely omitted by Russian leaders and if used, it was only in general statements of concern about the situation with the rights of Russians living in Latvia and Estonia (see Medvedev, 2008f) or when President Medvedev (2008d) spoke about abuses against Russians and Russian-speaking population and Moscow's responsibility to defend their rights. The meaning of this NRC and the frequency of its use changed in the second analysed

Table 12: Russia's NRCs during and after the Five-Day War (08-09.2008)

National role conception	Frequency (abs.)	Frequency (%)
Defender of Russian compatriots	17	28%
Guarantor of regional order	15	25%
Supporter of South Ossetians	11	18%
Supporter of international law	7	12%
Advocate of multi-polar world order	5	8%
Promoter of the new security system in Europe	5	8%

Source: Russian leaders' statements

period, particularly due to the situation in South Ossetia. For instance, Medvedev (2008g) spoke about Russians dying in South Ossetia due to Georgia's actions and stated that it was his duty as President to protect lives of Russian citizens. The leadership employed this NRC also when speaking about Russian peacekeepers in South Ossetia. Lavrov (2008e) said that Russia was disgusted seeing its citizens suffering, including peacekeepers, who had been performing their duties to guarantee peace and stability. He pointed out that Moscow would not allow the deaths of Russians to be unpunished and stressed that they would be protected. This NRC as well as arguments about humanitarian aid and support for Russian peacekeepers were also used by Lavrov (2008f) to explain the presence of ships of the Black Sea Fleet close to the Abkhazian border.

The defender of compatriots was also employed after the war to justify Russia's decision to intervene in Georgia which implies strategic use of this NRC. For instance, Medvedev (2008h) said that Russia did not want the war but 'no country in the world would stand by as its citizens and peacekeepers were being killed. Russia was obliged to save lives, to uphold law and justice'. Furthermore, during the Valdai club meeting the Russian President (Medvedev 2008i) said that the protection of its citizens was an absolute priority for Russia, especially in a new reality that emerged after 8 August 2008, which he compared to September 11 in the USA. In addition, this NRC was sometimes used in general terms to emphasise the importance of Russian compatriots for RFP (see Medvedev, 2008j) and the responsibility to protect Russian citizens living abroad was set out as one of the RFP priorities in President Medvedev's (2008k) five principles formed to guide Russia's international behaviour. Finally, it is worth noting that a very negative perception of Mikhail Saakashvili and his anti-Russianness (see section on internal factors) also contributed to the salience of this NRC. Such a perspective meant that the attack on Tskhinvali was not only against South

Ossetia but represented anti-Russian actions and this perception was only strengthened by the death of Russian peacekeepers.

Although more general than the above NRC, the **guarantor of regional order** was almost absent in the first analysed period and gained prominence with the start of the war in South Ossetia. This NRC illustrates Russia's desire to guarantee security in the post-Soviet space. Indeed, Russian decision-makers spoke about Moscow's peacekeeping obligations from the very beginning of military operations (e.g. see Lavrov, 2008h). Already on the 8th of August Medvedev said that Russia had always considered maintaining the peace to be its 'paramount task' and that 'Russia has historically been a guarantor for the security of the peoples of the Caucasus, and this remains true today'. He emphasised that defending security in the region had always been Russia's mission and duty, Russia had never been a passive observer in the region and never would be (Medvedev, 2008l).

In addition, justifications for intervention were also framed within this NRC. Medvedev explained that Russia had to react to Georgian aggression against South Ossetia in face of the 'killing of several thousand citizens' because otherwise the number of victims would have been much higher (Medvedev, 2008m). Likewise, Prime Minister Putin (2008a) said that for Russia the main aim was to guarantee security in the Caucasus and to prevent another armed confrontation. He added that in line with its peacekeeping duties, Russia was obliged to defend one of the parties in the event of the other's aggression and that was exactly what happened in South Ossetia (Putin, 2008b). Consequently, Russia used this NRC in the context of independence of South Ossetia and Abkhazia. Speaking about the future of Abkhazians and South Ossetians, Medvedev said that Russia as the guarantor of regional security 'will accept the decision that reflects the clear will of these two Caucasian peoples' (Medvedev, 2008n). After the recognition of the two republics, Russian leaders spoke about their engagement in providing order in the security-zones around South Ossetia and Abkhazia and emphasised Russia's duty to ensure peace and calm in the region (Medvedev, 2008j).

The NRC of **supporter and protector of South Ossetian people** appears to follow logically from the preceding one.[8] This indicates power relationships between these NRCs in which the guarantor of regional order is a more general, overarching role. As Russia saw itself as a guarantor of regional security, Moscow had to respond to Georgia's actions and protect the inhabitants of South Ossetia and potentially Abkhazia. Indeed, Medvedev said that in face

[8] Russian leaders spoke about support for South Ossetian and Abkhaz people but for brevity and clarity this NRC will speak about South Ossetians only.

of Georgian aggression and 'genocide', Russia's main responsibility was to 'prevent a humanitarian disaster and save the lives of people for whom we are responsible' (Medvedev, 2008o). In a similar tone, he stated that Russia had no other choice but to prevent 'any future genocide and exodus of Abkhazians and Ossetians from their territories' (Medvedev, 2008j), while Lavrov assured that Russia would guarantee the security of citizens of the two breakaway republics and would prevent any future wars there (Lavrov, 2008j).

Consequently, this NRC was also used to justify Abkhazia's and South Ossetia's independence. Lavrov emphasised that only recognition of independence of these territories could have guaranteed security and survival of 'fraternal peoples in the face of the chauvinistic course' (Lavrov, 2008k). He explained that Russia's decision to recognise South Ossetia and Abkhazia was driven by legal, moral and pragmatic factors, in particular security of people living there, and added that Russia could no longer 'wait when a Tbilisi blitzkrieg begins against South Ossetia or Abkhazia again' (Lavrov, 2008l). A similar argumentation was used by Medvedev who answering questions about the reasons for this decision said that it was done in order to 'to prevent killings and genocide' (Medvedev, 2008p). As such, as with the defender of compatriots role, more statements about protection of South Ossetians after the war and recognition of the two republics indicates strategic use of this NRC to explain and justify Russia's actions to domestic and international audience.

As in the first analysed period, Russian leaders emphasised the importance of **international law and their support for it**. They mainly used this NRC referring to the recognition of Kosovo by the West. For instance, Lavrov said that Russia, contrary to others did not engage in the interpretation of international law but observed it (Lavrov, 2008m). Putin asked why independence could have been recognised in Kosovo's case but not in Abkhazia's and South Ossetia's (Putin, 2008a) and said that Russia repeatedly asked the West to wait with Kosovo's recognition, explaining that this would cause many problems in the Caucasus and saying that during these talks Russia was the only one to resort to international law (Putin, 2008a, 2008c). In addition, in an interview with the German ARD Putin (2008a) referred to Russia's international legal commitments and compared the situation in South Ossetia to Srebrenica saying that under these agreements Russian peacekeepers were committed to protect the South Ossetian population. As such, also this NRC was employed to justify Russia's intervention and recognition of the two republics, mainly to the international community. This points to the importance of Russia's international status and expectations of significant others for the leadership. Finally, the leadership continued to

promote the new security system in Europe and their concerns about the inapplicability of the old one were exacerbated even further by the crisis in South Ossetia, which had fundamental significance for Russia's understanding of the European security architecture and (lack of) Russia's place in it (see Medvedev, 2008m).

Overall, the analysis of statements delivered by Russian decision-makers demonstrates that dominant NRCs changed compared with the Rose and Orange Revolution. Furthermore, the leadership perception of Russia's duties and responsibilities altered during the analysed crisis. The below section examines three levels of analysis: international, domestic and individual in order to answer what were the main factors that led to these changes.

International level of analysis and changing relations with the West

Looking at the distribution of NRCs in the first analysed period, a picture of Russia emerges that on the one hand, still wanted to be involved in various multi-lateral initiatives but on the other, less and less counted on the possibility of close cooperation with Western states (especially the USA) and had limited confidence in them. Indeed, the dominance of NRC that considered the creation of the new security system in Europe as one of Russia's main international duties implies lack of confidence in the existing security framework which largely resulted from decreasing mutual trust with Western partners (see below). During the two colour revolutions when Russia had much better relations with the West, and especially with the US due to the post-9/11 rapprochement, Russian leaders did not speak (or did it much less often) about the inapplicability of the contemporary security architecture. Consequently, this falling confidence in the West was one of the main reasons for the cessation of dominance of the NRC of Western partner. Instead, in the time leading to war with Georgia Russian leaders more often spoke about partnership with other states, such as China or Turkey as well as with former Soviet republics. It might have resulted from broader changes in the international system including the rising position of BRICS countries, nevertheless the analysis of leaders' statements points to the deteriorating relations with the West as the main reason for such developments.

One can think of many external sources of these worsening relations, but the Russian leadership spoke about three issues in particular: the US missile defence system, recognition of Kosovo and NATO expansion plans. First, in the time leading to the Five-Day War, the decision-makers often spoke with disappointment about the US decision to deploy the missile system in Europe. In Russia's view it undermined trust and might lead to a new arms

race in Europe and beyond (MFA, 2008a). Medvedev (2008n, 2008p) stated that as missiles were to be placed alongside Russia's borders, it was clear that the system was directed against Russia which threatened the state's security. Second, since the recognition of Kosovo's independence by Western countries Russia kept repeating that it had been a wrong decision and talked about its potential consequences. For instance, Putin (in Toal, 2017, p. 155) said that Kosovo was a dangerous example which 'blew up the whole system of international relations and might provoke a whole chain of unpredictable consequences'. Likewise, Medvedev (2008l) said that Kosovo set a dangerous and regrettable precedent as this situation would be used by other separatist regimes to justify their own status. More importantly, the Kosovo case demonstrated to Russian leaders that Western states completely ignored Russia's appeals even in cases which were not fundamental to their interests but were important to Moscow (for more see Friedman, 2008). Third, Russia was distrustful of NATO's expansion plans to Georgia and Ukraine which were seen as a threat to Russia's interests and security. In April 2008, just after the NATO summit in Bucharest, Putin (in Evans, 2008) clearly explained how such developments were perceived in Russia saying that NATO enlargement into to the East was 'a direct threat to the security of' Russia.

Against this background, the Five-Day War only strengthened these perceptions and deepened the crisis in mutual relations. This is reflected in the distribution of NRCs which shows that the partner of the West role completely disappeared from Russian leaders' agenda after the confrontation with Georgia. The impact of the August 2008 events could not have been presented more clearly than in Medvedev's (2008i) statement when he said that the situation in the Caucasus meant losing all the illusions that had remained since the collapse of the USSR. In addition, the Russian President explicitly stated that Russia's relations with NATO had not been easy since the conflict in South Ossetia. He elaborated saying that Russia had worked to develop ties with NATO but in return got the illusion of partnership as NATO was surrounding Russia with its bases and was accepting more and more countries while telling Russia 'don't worry, everything is fine' (Medvedev, 2008r). Furthermore, in Russia's perception the MAP (Membership Action Plan that included Ukraine and Georgia) was an anti-Russian policy that supported an aggressive regime in Tbilisi (Lavrov, 2008n). The above statements indicate that not the Western support for the colour revolutions, as it is often suggested, but its, especially US, support for Georgia's membership in NATO as well as American military support for the Georgian army (which was later used, among others, against Russian peacekeepers in South Ossetia) was what definitely undermined Russia's

confidence in the West and further deteriorated mutual relations. Overall, the analysis demonstrates that as relations with the West were no longer as important to Russia as they had been and the distrust deepened even further, Russian leaders stopped pursuing pro-cooperative NRCs and started to advocate more assertive ones, such as defender of compatriots and guarantor of regional order that focused on Russia's responsibilities and interests in the post-Soviet space.

Perceptions of events in Georgia and its president, and Russia as a guarantor of regional order

On the eve of the Five-Day War, apart from international factors, the regional context was also different compared to the Orange, and especially to the Rose Revolution. After the colour revolutions and Western, particularly American, efforts of democracy promotion which were considered in Moscow no different as expansion of Western sphere of influence, the post-Soviet space was an increasingly contested area where plans and interests of Russia and the West conflicted more and more often. As such, Russia's perception of the US role in rising tensions in the Caucasus and the view of the Georgian leadership as a 'special project' of the USA (see Lavrov, 2008s) contributed to changes in dominant NRCs.

Such perceptions influenced the formation of Russian elites' attitude toward Georgia in general, and Saakashvili in particular. March (2012, p. 25) notes that Russian nationalists were especially negative about Saakashvili, perceiving him as an American marionette and comparing him and his rule to Pinochet or even Hitler. Furthermore, the animosities between Putin and Saakashvili are well known. One can recall Putin's statement in which he threatened to 'hang Saakashvili by the balls' (Telegraph, 2008) to illustrate the Russian Prime Minister's animosity towards the Georgian President. Georgia was seen in Russia in similarly negative light. Lapidus (2007, p. 152) points out that due to its pro-Western attitude and efforts to distance itself from Moscow, Georgia was perceived by Russian elites as a 'heretical model'. These negative feelings about Georgia and its president were shared by the Russian public (see section on public opinion). As such, these opinions were significantly different compared with those of Georgia and Ukraine during the colour revolutions which also influenced changes in dominant NRCs and increased significance of more assertive roles.

Russia for a long time had blamed Saakashvili for lack of settlement between Georgia and two breakaway republics (e.g. see MFA, 2008) and these accusations as well as negative images of Georgia and its president escalated even further following the events of August 2008. Russian decision-makers unambiguously blamed the Georgian leadership for the

conflict in South Ossetia and continued to demonise it. Speaking about Saakashvili, Medvedev (2008m) said that 'there are some people who, unlike normal people, once they've smelt blood it is very hard to stop them' and stated that Saakashvili undertook genocide to achieve his goals (Medvedev, 2008s). Furthermore, the usually moderate Russian President indirectly compared the Georgian leadership to the Nazis. Speaking about the need to protect people in South Ossetia, Medvedev (2008l) said that enforcing peace was the only possible solution and explained that appeasing could have resulted in consequences as tragic as the appeasement of the Nazis in 1938 in Munich. As such, one can notice a completely different attitude of Russian decision-makers toward Saakashvili compared to their attitude to him during the Rose Revolution and to the leaders of the Orange Revolution. These very negative opinions about Georgia and its leadership contributed to the dominance of NRCs such as defender of compatriots and supporter of South Ossetians. However, such an attitude was at least partly the result of Saakashvili's increasingly anti-Russian position and the character of the 2008 crisis. For instance, the Georgian President described Russia as a threat not only to Georgia but to the entire world community (see Whitmore, 2008). Furthermore, he presented Russia as a villain saying that Georgia 'is a borderline between the good and the evil, civilization and lack of civilization' (Interfax, 2008a).

This spiral of mutual accusations and dehumanization of the other side was the opposite of Russia's relations with the leaders of the two colour revolutions after their victory, and could contribute to the adoption of more assertive NRCs and Russian intervention in South Ossetia for several reasons. First, Russian leaders knew that they could not count on negotiations with Saakashvili. Second, Saakashvili's anti-Russian attitude combined with his close relations with the West had been arousing concerns in Moscow for a long time. Third and related, due to his open anti-Russianness, Saakashvili was viewed as the worst evil by Russian nationalists. Finally, such portrayal of Georgia and its president suited the Kremlin which could consolidate domestic support around the external enemy and which gained a new legitimacy fighting this enemy. As such, I argue that this picture of Georgia and Saakashvili contributed to a change in the perception of Russia's role from a regional mediator (the main regional NRC during the two colour revolutions) to guarantor of order in the post-Soviet space. Consequently, this responsibility for regional security and order enabled the emergence and dominance of NRCs which spoke about the duty to protect Russian compatriots and South Ossetian people as the existence of these conceptions along with the regional mediator would have meant role conflict.

Furthermore, the character of the crisis itself was different and more aggressive compared with the two colour revolutions, which was reflected in Russian leaders' statements. In particular, the killing of Russian peacekeepers appears to be an important factor. For instance, Putin said that only after the list of casualties had grown and Russian peacekeepers had been killed, had the Russian President decided to intervene to save lives of civilians and Russian peacekeepers (Putin, 2008c). He also added that the killings of Russian peacekeepers and civilians 'were tantamount to an attack on Russia' (Putin, 2008a). These statements indicate that Georgia's military aggression and the death of Russian peacekeepers could have played a role in gaining dominance by three more assertive NRCs in the second period of analysis

Finally, looking from the regional perspective, it is important to note that the introduction of troops to South Ossetia, apart from the official motivation to protect people living there, thwarted Tbilisi's chances for the accession to NATO. More broadly, intervening in South Ossetia Moscow sent a signal to other post-Soviet states which thought about NATO membership, such as Ukraine and Moldova, that a similar scenario might take place with their territories, Crimea and Transnistria, respectively. In addition, by advocating the NRC of guarantor of regional order and presenting itself as an indispensable part of regional peace and stability, Russia might have tried to restore its position not only in the Caucasus but throughout the post-Soviet space and send a signal that the Kremlin would not tolerate similar situations in Russia's near abroad. However, the analysis of the leadership statements demonstrates that apart from international and regional contexts, there were also important domestic sources of changes in Russia's NRCs.

Domestic level of analysis: economic growth and rising sense of injustice

Stability, rapid economic development and the 'Orange contagion'

There were some important changes in Russian domestic situation between the colour revolutions and the Five-Day War. During this time Russia GDP growth rate did not fall below 6.4% (Macrotrends, 2020), Russia further stabilised internally and strengthened economically. As some analysts point out (Gudkov, 2017), 'Russians never lived as well as they did during that time frame due to high oil prices and redistribution of wealth, etc. Despite the signs of a strengthening authoritarian regime, people were willing to agree to accept it'. Gudkov's statement grasps two important processes which at that time took place in Russia. On the one hand, Russia was quickly developing economically which affected not

only the lives of the elite, but also ordinary residents. On the other hand, authoritarian tendencies in Russia were growing and some democratic processes began to recede. This situation is commonly known as the social contract which guaranteed economic well-being in exchange for political freedoms, in other words 'we restrict your political freedoms, but feed you instead' (see Kolesnikov, 2015, p. 3). Furthermore, growing internal stability and strengthened economy also helped to reduce the threat of terrorism. As a result of these processes, the importance of NRCs such as internal developer and advocate of anti-terrorist initiatives, that were among the most important conceptions during the two colour revolutions, decreased significantly.

Nevertheless, the economic situation, which had been improving for many years, was no longer enough for many Russians as they got used to better situation and the contrast with the chaos and poverty of the 1990s, which had been one of the pillars of the regime's support, was an increasingly distant memory. For instance, in July 2008 confidence in Vladimir Putin fell by 17% since January 2008 (Levada, 2008a). As such, more assertive foreign policy and opposition to the growing US influence in the region (as seen in Russia) might provide new legitimacy arguments that by supporting or replacing the old ones could strengthen the regime's position among the elites and public opinion. Consequently, the image of aggressive Georgia and its anti-Russian president that threatens compatriots living abroad also served this goal as it helped to consolidate domestic support against the external enemy. Indeed, Medvedev's and Putin's approval ratings increased to unprecedented levels in the aftermath of the war (Levada, 2008b). The above processes cannot be considered as a direct cause of Russia's intervention. Nevertheless, such narrative and presentation of the situation in the Caucasus (inadvertently) created a broader context in which NRCs speaking about the protection of Russian compatriots and South Ossetians were expected in the country and in which the authorities' decisions aimed at defending national interests even at the expense of war were accepted or even expected.

Another source of such an internal context and the growing authoritarianism was the so-called 'Orange contagion', which resulted from the fear of repeating the situation from the Orange Revolution in Russia. Indeed, Russia analysts (see Herd, 2005; Petrov and Ryabov, 2006; Wilson, 2010) note that initially the colour revolutions had primarily internal consequences. As such, in face of the approaching 2008 presidential elections authorities were afraid of the 'Orange scenario' in Russia and of general instability which could follow and as the operational code analysis of Putin demonstrates, he considers chaos and

instability as existential threats (Dyson and Parent, 2018, p. 930). This resulted in the leadership emphasis on the concept of 'sovereign democracy', which in international realm meant less focus on pro-cooperative NRCs and more on assertive ones. Consequently, these domestic processes in the period leading to the war resulted in the convergence of civilisationist (nationalist) and official discourses in Russia (March, 2012, p. 8) which contributed to the presentation of Georgia and its president in a very negative light, even as Russia's enemies. Such a character of the debate, which was absent during the two colour revolutions, made the intervention not only thinkable but also desirable.

The sense of injustice and Russia's wounded honour

It is important to note that although the strengthened internal situation decreased emphasis on internal development, and consequently, partnership with the West, the latter NRC also lost its significance because of the growing sense of injustice resulting from the perception of unequal treatment of Moscow by its Western partners. Russia's sense of injustice and humiliation had been growing since the collapse of the Soviet Union. In 2008 these long-growing feelings were deepened by the NATO's Bucharest summit where it was said that Ukraine and Georgia would become members of the organisation, the proposal which Medvedev (in Shearman and Sussex, 2009, p. 18) described as 'unjust, humiliating, and intolerable'. The sense of injustice and unfair treatment can be found in many speeches of Russian politicians before the War in South Ossetia. For instance, speaking about relations between the West and Russia, Medvedev (2008e) noticed that Moscow wanted to search for common solutions instead of constantly bringing Russia's policies closer to those of the West. Thus, Russia's decreased emphasis on partner of the West role and increased on NRCs such as promoter of the new security system which was understood as a project taking the interests of different parties to the same extent.

These feelings reached their climax with Georgia's attack on South Ossetia. Such a strong impact of the attack on Russia resulted from several factors. First, Russia perceived itself as a guarantor of security in the region or even as historic protector of Georgia (see Tsygankov and Tarver-Wahlquist, 2009, p. 308). As Medvedev explained, Russia had 'spent 17 years trying to install order there […] to fix what broke down a long time ago. And what did we get? Not only did no one say thank you to us, but they started shooting at us' (Medvedev, 2008i). As such, Georgia's rejection of Russia's role as well as lack of gratitude and will to cooperate after the assistance with Adjara crisis was understood as an insult to Russia's honour. Furthermore, the sense of injustice and even betrayal resulted from

a perception of the US role in the Caucasus. For instance, Medvedev suggested that the USA was behind Tbilisi's actions saying that the Georgian leadership had been preparing for war with political and military support provided by its foreign partners (Medvedev, 2008s). In other words, the attack in Russia's view was provoked by the USA and was performed by an army trained by NATO that used weapons delivered by NATO. As such, in Russian perception many civilians and Russian peacekeepers died because of US support for Georgia. Finally, the feeling of total disregard for Russia resulted from ignoring Moscow's appeals and warnings sent to the USA regarding Georgia. Russian leaders pointed out that they had warned the West for many years against arming Georgia explaining that this might encourage Saakashvili to resolve the situation in the breakaway republics by force (Lavrov, 2008d; Putin, 2008e, 2008d).

This sense of disrespect for Russia's opinions and interests was seen in the leaders' speeches also after the war. For instance, Medvedev (2008t) explaining that Moscow's actions in Georgia were defensive, said that Russia had not aimed at any escalation but what it had wanted was 'respect for our country, our people and our values'. As such, in the context of severely damaged trust, Georgia's attack and Western unilateral support for Tbilisi deepened Russia's sense of injustice and wounded Russia's honour. Consequently, it was a key factor which resulted in the revision of Russia's international responsibilities and led to the change of cooperative NRCs to more assertive ones that emphasised interests of Russia and its compatriots. The two following sections examine whether NRCs dominant among the leadership were contested by public opinion and Russian elites.

Public opinion and vertical contestation

Background information

In general, opinion polls conducted in years preceding the war show that the Russian public was sensitive to events in Abkhazia and South Ossetia but at the same time almost half of them did not sympathize with either side of the conflict (Levada, 2008c). They also demonstrate that public opinion was generally confused and deeply divided around these issues (see Levada, 2008c). It means that on the one hand, there was no clear majority neither for the independence of the two republics, nor for their inclusion into the Russian Federation and on the other, that the public probably could have been easily convinced to either of these scenarios, including Russia's intervention if Georgia used force against South Ossetia or Abkhazia.

Russians were also divided regarding their state's role in these two frozen conflicts, with slight dominance of a peacekeeper and mediator role (Levada, 2008c), which is consistent with the public views expressed not long before the war in South Ossetia. Indeed, in June 2008, asked about the position that Russia should take concerning international conflicts in other countries of the former USSR only 6% of Russians said that their country should intervene in these conflicts using armed force, almost 40 % said that Russia should not interfere in these events and remain completely neutral, while almost half of respondents (47%) said that Russia should be a mediator that tries to reconcile the warring parties (Levada, 2008d). Furthermore, it is also important to note that even before the war, Russians did not have warm feelings toward Georgia and they perceived its policy as representing even bigger threat to Russian national interest than that led by the USA (Levada, 2008e). Russians had similar feelings toward the Georgian President, Saakashvili. In 2006 he was ranked second among the persons with the most negative image in the Russian media (only behind President Bush). In 2008 Saakashvili was third, behind Bush and Ukrainian President Victor Yushchenko but with the beginning of the war in South Ossetia he 'advanced' to first positon (Filippov, 2009, p. 1836). These results demonstrate that contrary to the two colour revolutions, Russians had very negative opinions about their neighbour and its leadership and indicate a greater likelihood of supporting assertive NRCs toward Georgia.

Opinions about the situation in South Ossetia and Russia's roles

Although before August 2008 Russians had been divided on the Ossetian issue, the beginning of the war definitely changed their views. In the poll conducted on 9-10 August 2008, that is just after the beginning of war, 71% of Russians said that they sympathised with South Ossetians while only 2% were on Georgia's side. Consequently, only 4% supported return of the two breakaway republics to Georgia, 34% were for their independence and almost half of respondents supported their accession to the Russian Federation (Levada, 2008f). Furthermore, the majority of Russians said that their country should send troops to South Ossetia and even more people were positive about sending Russian volunteers to fight against Georgia (Levada, 2008f). According to a survey conducted by VTsIOM, almost 40% of Russians backed the government's actions in the Caucasus while 25% believed Russia should have taken tougher position toward Georgia. In total, it gives a significant majority of public opinion for an interventionist approach (RIA, 2008). These results indicate solid public support for three dominant NRCs during the war, that are defender of compatriots, guarantor of regional order and supporter of South Ossetians.

Furthermore, Russians believed that the conflict had been caused by the USA that wanted to spread its influence in the post-Soviet space (49%) and by the Georgian leadership's discriminatory policies towards the population of South Ossetia and Abkhazia (32%) (Levada, 2008g). Consequently, 43% of Russians believed that Georgia had used force in South Ossetia because it needed to address its territorial problems in order to join NATO, the majority of Russians (66%) thought that the West had taken Georgia's side in the conflict in order to weaken Russia and 'squeeze' it out of the Caucasus, and almost three quarters of respondents said that Georgian people had been victims of the US geopolitical goals (Levada, 2008g). These results imply that Russians saw the conflict as a part of a broader geopolitical game which explains such a strong support for more assertive NRCs and Russia's policies toward Georgia. A statement of one of the inhabitants of Moscow perfectly sums up such logic. Asked about his views of Russia's place in the world, Fyodor (RFERL, 2008a) said that 'it is time for Russia to rise from its knees after all. We should simply be able already to stand up for our interests. It's obvious that Georgia's government is following orders from the outside in its policies. Of course, it is in my interests not to have foreign missiles stationed around my borders. One should be a patriot of one's own country'. This perception of Russia's, Georgia's and US roles in international affairs as well as the general public perception of Russia's actions as a prevention of conflict's escalation and bloodshed (70%) rather than military operation per se, may explain huge public support for the intervention.

Consequently, a huge majority of Russians (80%) considered recognition of Abkhazia's and South Ossetia's independence as a right step (Levada, 2008h). As such, Russian authorities once again acted in accordance with the public moods which indicates their careful observation by the regime. Indeed, Lavrov said that the decision about the recognition, which ensured the survival of people in South Ossetia and Abkhazia, was taken, among others, in response to the public expectations in Russia (Lavrov, 2008j, 2008p). In addition, it is important to mention that only 13% of Russians did not see anything wrong in isolation of Russia from the rest of the world (Levada, 2008h). This implies that the majority would not have been pleased with Russia's deteriorating international position and isolation which could have prevented the Kremlin from more radical actions, like ousting Saakashvili from power or incorporating South Ossetia and Abkhazia. Finally, the war improved the regime's ratings and lowered these of the opposition (Levada, 2008i; Volkov, 2008), which shows that in case of external threat, Russians consolidate around the authorities, as during the 2014 Ukraine crisis (see the following chapter).

To sum up, the above analysis demonstrates that public opinion generally shared the leadership understanding of the conflict and despite popularity of peacekeeper and mediator role before the war, Russians supported dominant NRCs, such as defender of compatriots and South Ossetians, and guarantor of regional order. Consequently, despite divisions on some issues (especially before the outbreak of war), no significant role contestation processes were observed but at the same time, as in case of other upheavals, the leadership did not take any decisions that were against the public expectations. Furthermore, this research indicates that negative views of Georgia and Saakashvili as well as the public perception of the situation as a broader geopolitical dispute might have contributed to the dominance of the above NRCs. As such, in the analysed crisis public opinion did not act as a constraint on Russia's decisions but rather as a push for more assertive NRCs and foreign policy actions.

Horizontal contestation

Examining how Russian elites saw their state's roles during the Five-Day War required some interpretive effort as relatively few politicians (apart from Medvedev, Putin, and Lavrov) openly said that Russia should take a particular role in world affairs. However, at times it was possible to interpret implied roles and surmise what kind of NRCs actors envisaged from their choice of language and their preferred images of Russia (see Gaskarth, 2016). This section begins with the examination of contestation processes among the Russian parliamentary opposition. The second part analyses statements delivered by leaders of non-parliamentary groups, while the last one investigates attitudes among Russian intelligentsia.

Parliamentary opposition and nationalists

At the end of the military operation in Georgia Medvedev (2008l) thanked all the parliamentary parties for supporting the decisions of the leadership in those difficult circumstances. Furthermore, the Federation Council and State Duma unanimously adopted an appeal to the President to recognize the independence of Abkhazia and South Ossetia (Kommersant, 2008). This evidence best illustrates the attitude of the parliamentary opposition to the war in Georgia and Russia's role in the recognition of the two breakaway republics. Nevertheless, it is still worth analysing statements of the opposition leaders as their positions were not always consistent with those presented by the Kremlin and were often much more radical.

Even before the conflict in South Ossetia, two main parliamentary opposition parties had been urging the Russian leadership to recognise South Ossetia and Abkhazia. Their positions were only strengthened by the events of August 2008. Gennady Zyuganov, leader of the Communist Party of the Russian Federation (CPRF), the biggest opposition party, said that Georgians not only had started the war but also had killed Ossetian civilians and Russian peacekeepers. He supported an interventionist role as well as NRCs such as defender of Russian compatriots and protector of South Ossetians saying that it was Russia's duty to intervene in the conflict (Zyuganov in Digol, 2009, p. 113). Furthermore, Zyuganov expressed dissatisfaction with the insufficient actions of the government saying that Russia 'should have bombed the entire military infrastructure of the Saakashvilists' and stating that recognition itself was not enough and Russia should guarantee the security of the two republics (Kommersant, 2008). A similar position was presented by Vladimir Zhirinovsky, leader of the Liberal Democratic Party of Russia (LDPR), who also supported the recognition of South Ossetia's independence. Zhirinovsky expressed dissatisfaction with the extent of the Kremlin's actions pointing out that the Russian government should have conducted a pre-emptive attack on Georgia which would have saved many lives (Zhirinovsky in Digol, 2009, p. 114). In addition, he argued that Russia should not have stopped in Gori and should have taken the whole Georgia under control and arrested Saakashvili (Kommersant, 2008).

Likewise, Sergei Mironov, leader of A Just Russia Party and the Federation Council Speaker, also supported interventionist position and the NRC of protector of South Ossetians. He said that the intervention had been the only viable choice to defend the local population because Georgians had been eliminating these people and Saakashvili had been killing them (Mironov in Digol, 2009, p. 114). He added that the situation in Georgia represented 'an unprecedented act of genocide, and those who were guilty of this should be punished' (Mironov, 2008). Finally, Dmitry Rogozin, Russian Permanent Envoy to NATO and former leader of the Rodina party, apart from accusing Saakashvili of war crimes and genocide (Kimmage, 2008), stated that the USA had been a direct participant in the conflict as it had provided weapons to Georgia (Rogozin in Thomas, 2009, p. 47). In addition, he said that if Georgia joined NATO, it would do it without South Ossetia and Abkhazia because there was no referendum in these territories (Rogozin in Makarychev, 2009, pp. 46–47).

NRCs advocating protection of Russian compatriots and South Ossetians, and generally Russia's more active role in the post-Soviet space were also supported by Russian nationalists, who had been strengthened in the years leading to the war and their views had

gained popularity in Russia due to, among others, the Western support for the colour revolutions, its criticism of Russia's domestic situation and increasing disagreements in international arena. Furthermore, and related, civilizational nationalism influenced foreign policy debate to a large extent during this period (March, 2012). Consequently, civilisationalists' ideas were not unfamiliar to politicians close to the Kremlin. Indeed, Alexander Sokolov - former Minister of Culture, Alexander Torshin - Vice- (and later) Chairman of the Federation Council, presidential adviser Aslambek Aslakhanov, and Eduard Kokoity - South Ossetia's president, in 2008 were all members of the International Eurasianist Movement which had been created by Aleksander Dugin, main ideologue of Russian expansionism (see Laruelle, 2008). In addition, in May 2008 Ivan Demidov, supporter of ethnocentric and Orthodox nationalism, became a leader of the ideological arm of United Russia. As Laruelle (2008) points out, through him Dugin influenced various officials who supported the legitimization of the post-Soviet area as the Russian sphere of influence.

Moreover, Dugin himself was heavily involved in the Russo-Georgian crisis taking a position in favour of intensification of tensions and Russia's intervention (see Laruelle, 2008). For instance, having been with his Youth Movement in South Ossetia just before the war he said that there was the border 'in the battle of civilizations' and that 'we want to put an end to America's hegemony […] Our troops will occupy the Georgian capital Tbilisi, the entire country' (Spiegel, 2008). In Dugin's opinion, Georgia would have never attacked Russia on its own and after the preparation of Georgian forces, NATO and the USA tested Russia; if Russia had not reacted in South Ossetia, it would have lost the status of not only a great world power, but also of a regional one (Dugin, 2008). As such, Dugin endorsed the intervention and NRCs such as guarantor of regional order, and defender of compatriots and South Ossetians but criticised the Russian leadership saying that many people would have been saved if Russia had intervened earlier. Furthermore, he not only supported the recognition of South Ossetia's independence but argued that Russia should incorporate both South Ossetia and Abkhazia because that was the wish of these two republics (Bila, 2008; Dugin, 2008). A similar position was presented by the National Bolsheviks, an opposition party that warmly approved the Russian intervention in South Ossetia and whose leader, Eduard Limonov, supported even more decisive actions and demanded to introduce Russian troops to Abkhazia (Vishnevskiy, 2008).

Overall, the parliamentary opposition and nationalists demanded even more aggressive solutions to the crisis but at the same time strongly supported NRCs that

advocated protection of Russian compatriots and South Ossetians. Due to their strengthened position, the public support for some of their propositions as well as their access to decision-makers, they might have influenced the dominance of the above NRCs and, consequently, RFP behaviour, at least shaping the public debate on foreign policy.

Liberal opposition

The assessment of the situation in South Ossetia and more generally of Russia's relations with Georgia and the West was much different among the liberal opposition. For instance, Mikhail Kasyanov, former Putin's prime minister and in 2008 leader of the People's Democratic Union party, contested the intervention saying that Russia had been provoking Georgia. In Kasyanov's opinion, Russia should have continued acting as a peacekeeper and mediator in the Caucasus. He also added that a disproportionate response to Georgia's actions might lead to the deterioration of Russia's position in the world (Kasyanov in Digol, 2009, p. 114).

However, even among the liberal opposition not everyone sharply criticized the Kremlin's decisions, sometimes finding arguments in support of them. Sergei Mitrokhin, leader of Yabloko party, said that his party had once condemned the Kremlin's decisions about Chechnya so in the same manner they condemned Georgia's actions in South Ossetia. He called to stop hostilities but this appeal was mainly addressed to the Georgian leadership. As Kasyanov, Mitrokhin strongly supported roles of peacekeeper and mediator suggesting deploying Russian peacekeeping forces to separate the fighting sides and arguing that Russia should finally play an active role in the conflict's settlement and that 'it must become a mediator and stop always being on one side' (RFERL, 2008b). Furthermore, he said that Russia should stop the military operation as soon as possible but at the same time appealed to NATO to take Georgia's membership in this organisation off the table (Mitrokhin in Digol, 2009, p. 114). Consequently, Garry Kasparov, chairman of the United Civil Front, on the one hand, said that the war began due to Saakashvili's actions but on the other, pointed out that the Russian leadership had been also preparing for war and had aimed at overthrowing Saakashvili. According to Kasparov, only when this plan did not work, Russian leaders decided to recognise the independence of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. He was very critical about this decision saying that it was made in the worst moment and could have negative consequences for Russia (Kasparov, 2008). Ambiguous position of some leaders of the liberal opposition shows that the conflict in South Ossetia was understood differently from the colour revolutions. The deaths of many civilians and Russian peacekeepers as well as Georgia's

actions could have contributed to such understanding, to the lack of unequivocal contestation of the defender of compatriots role and to the strong support for the NRCs of mediator and peacekeeper.

That said, there was greater unanimity among liberals regarding the decision to recognize the independence of the two breakaway republics. Leaders of non-parliamentary opposition, among others, Kasparov, Boris Nemtsov, former deputy prime minister and co-founder of the Union of Right Forces and Maxim Reznik, Yabloko's chief in St. Petersburg, issued a joint statement in which they criticised the Kremlin's decision to recognise independence of South Ossetia and Abkhazia. Liberals, who generally supported Russia's pro-European course and NRC of partner of the West, wrote that the authorities decision would deteriorate Russia's relations with Western partners and post-Soviet states (Bernstein, 2008).

Russian intellectuals

More heterogeneous approaches could be found among Russian intellectuals and journalists. Ivan Sukhov, reporter covering Caucasus-related issues, wrote that Tbilisi's offensive was a serious mistake, even if it had been provoked by South Ossetians, while Russian military commentator, Aleksandr Goltz, said that from military point of view, there was no doubt that a full-blown war was initiated by the Georgian leadership (RFERL, 2008b). Aleksandr Konovalov, president of the Institute of Strategic Evaluation, supported both interventionist role and partnership with the West. He argued that the decision to enter Georgia but not to seize Tbilisi had been a correct one because on the one hand, Russia had sent a message to the West that it would defend its interests but on the other, this decision had not destroyed Russia's chances of cooperation with Western partners (Konovalov in Digol, 2009, p. 115). More explicit support for the Kremlin's position was presented by Vyacheslav Nikonov, Russian political scientist, who perceived Georgia's actions as an existential threat to which any state would have to respond and even compared it to the 9/11 terrorist attacks (Nikonov in March, 2012, p. 33). Statements of these commentators indicate that in general, they supported Russia's interventionist position and NRCs, such as defender of compatriots and supporter of South Ossetians. At the same time, some of them also supported the NRC of Western partner that actually ceased to be used by the leadership after the beginning of the war.

On the other hand, Boris Vishnevskiy (2008), political scientist and Novaya Gazeta publicist, unequivocally criticized introduction of Russian armed forces to Georgia explicitly

saying that these actions had constituted military aggression. Furthermore, he compared Russia's policy of giving passports to South Ossetians and Abkhazians to Hitler's actions in Sudetenland and pointed to the hypocrisy of such policies recalling the difficulties experienced by citizens born on territories of the former USSR trying to get Russian citizenship. Vishnevskiy explained that the goal of this policy was to have an excuse for interfering in South Ossetia or/and Abkhazia at any convenient moment for the Kremlin (Vishnevskiy, 2008). In a similar tone, Boris Strugatsky (in Digol, 2009, p. 115), a famous Soviet-Russian science fiction author, described Russia as a totalitarian state which thrived on short victorious wars and which would never allow Georgia to leave its sphere of influence. In addition, Russian aggression was condemned by Russian human rights and civil activists, such as Lev Ponomarev, Sergei Kovalev and Elena Bonner (Vishnevskiy, 2008). These groups already in July campaigned against war and recognition of the South Ossetia and Abkhazia (Interfax, 2008b). As such, attitudes of these actors, their condemnation of Russia's intervention and recognition of the two breakaway republics imply that they did not support conceptions, such as defender compatriots (and South Ossetians) or guarantor of regional order as it was Russia and its actions which they perceived as a threat to stability and peace.

To sum up, in 2009 Mankoff (2009, p. 5) wrote that Russia's more assertive foreign policy largely resulted from a broad elite consensus about the role Russia should play in the world. The above analysis of statements delivered by members of the Russian elite confirms this conclusion but only to a certain degree. Indeed, Russian elites, especially parliamentary opposition and nationalists, largely supported NRCs advocated by the Russian leadership. At the same time, some contestation processes in two directions existed. On the one hand, liberal opposition and human rights activists did not speak about the duty to protect Russian compatriots and people living in South Ossetia but strongly supported peacekeeper's and mediator's roles. At the same time, expressing concerns about the decrease in mutual trust and future relations with the West, they demonstrated support for NRC of the partner of the West. Nevertheless, internal divisions within non-parliamentary opposition, its general weakness and very limited channels to influence public debate meant that their contestation of dominant NRCs could not influence RFP behaviour in any significant way. On the other hand, radical opposition and nationalists supported NRCs, such as guarantor of regional order, and defender of Russian compatriots and South Ossetians but also advocated Russia's more aggressive foreign policy and interventionist role in the post-Soviet space. Contrary to liberal contestation, due to strengthened position of nationalists, constant presence in the

Duma, access to the media and (consequently) the popularity of their views among the public, these groups could have impact on the public debate and indirectly shape RFP, although to a limited extent.

Individual level of analysis: changes among leaders and their perceptions

Perception of Russia as an increasingly important international player

The sense of injustice described in the previous section was even greater because of the growing gap between the West's expectations of Russia's role and the leadership perception of Russia as an increasingly important international player. Consequently, I argue, that the reassessment of NRCs would not have been possible without the leadership perception of Russia as a stronger state and increasingly important international player. Indeed, in the summer of 2008 Russian leaders often spoke about their state's increasing position in regional and world affairs. For instance, while presenting RFP course Medvedev emphasized Russia's rising role in world affairs and added that Russia was determined to be a key player in designing the future of international relations (RFERL, 2008c). Lavrov spoke about Russia gaining strength, its position in the international arena becoming more robust (Lavrov, 2008q) and stated that due to these processes and strengthening of Russia's role, its responsibilities in world affairs had increased (Lavrov, 2008l). Likewise, the new Foreign Policy Concept, adopted in January 2008, repeatedly underscored Russia's 'increased role [...] in international affairs' (Foreign Policy Concept, 2008). Russian leaders' understanding of their state's new place and role in the regional and world affairs was shared by Russian analysts. Fyodor Lukyanov wrote that it was no more possible to overlook Russia as it had been 10 years earlier (RFERL, 2008c), while Kryshtanovskaya noted that due to economic power and high oil prices Russia was on the rise internationally (Bigg, 2008).

This change in Russia's self-perception and its international position is crucial to explain the salience of many NRCs in both analysed periods. The presence of many pro-cooperative NRCs in the first phase indicates that new, stronger Russia wanted to assume more responsibilities in the world arena. After a time of internal reconstruction, Russia aimed to take its proper place and co-decide about the fate of the region and the world. However, as a result of Georgia's attack on South Ossetia and Western support for Tbilisi, not only the salience of partnership with the West and other pro-cooperative NRCs decreased, but Russia's new position began to be reflected in its emphasis on regional responsibilities and the need to build a new multi-polar world order. Consequently, it impacted the leadership

perception of increased duties in the post-Soviet space, such as guaranteeing peace and order, and protecting compatriots and people living in the neighbouring republics.

Changes in the leadership

These changes in perceptions of Russia's international responsibilities were also facilitated by shifts in the power circles. Compared to the two colour revolutions liberal advisers focused on Russia's economic development left key positions. The first to resign was Andrei Illarionov, Putin's senior economic adviser who had been responsible for Russia's external economic agenda. The thorough analysis of the power relations within the regime done by Kryshtanovskaya and White (2005) indicates that Illarionov's opinions were important and, for example, he attended (along with such influential figures as Igor Sechin and Medvedev) government meetings although not having ministerial rank. Illarionov, disappointed with Russia's changing course left his position in 2005 saying that Russia was no longer a democratic country and free country (Finn, 2005). In addition, two years later German Gref, one of the leaders of the liberal camp, left the government. Gref was considered to play a part in the formation of RFP as since 2000 he had headed the ministry of Economic Development, the most important entity in economic and trade issues (Feifer, 2002; Sergunin, 2008, p. 70). His ministry was also to a large extent responsible for Russia's internal development. Consequently, with the departure of these officials one can notice the decreasing importance of economic issues in RFP and as a consequence, more general changes such as less emphasis on cooperation with the west. As such, out of officials considered as leaders of the liberal camp during Putin's first and second term only Alexey Kudrin was left in the government or the presidential administration when the decision about the intervention in Georgia was made. It indicates that the faction emphasizing the importance of economic affairs, which may have raised doubts about the intervention due to potential economic consequences, was less represented than during the two colour revolutions.

Last but by no means least, the war in August 2008 followed an important period of transfer of power in Russia as in May 2008, Putin was replaced by Medvedev as president of the Russian Federation after eight years in office. This process took place without major problems. However, the division of responsibilities between the president and the new prime minister - Putin - was not entirely clear, which might have influenced Russia's decisions toward Georgia and its two breakaway republics. Indeed, the analysis of Medvedev's

statements during the crisis shows exceptionally aggressive language for this politician which may indicate attempts to strengthen his rather uncertain position.

Without access to insider's knowledge, the role of both Medvedev and Putin in the crisis remains unclear and it is difficult to state unequivocally whether there were significant differences between them. However, the president's efforts mentioned above may have been an attempt to strengthen his position not necessarily vis-à-vis Putin, but the siloviki. For instance, Mankoff (2009, p. 83) points out that military and security services might have taken advantage of Medvedev's uncertain position to precipitate the crisis. When pondering over these arguments, it is important to remember that Medvedev did not have high ratings either among siloviki or Russian nationalists. As such, by intervening in South Ossetia and advocating assertive NRCs (defender of compatriots, guarantor of regional order) that were expected from him, Medvedev might aim to improve his position among this part of the elite, which had grown stronger in the years leading to the 2008 war, and show that he was able to defend Russian national interests. Furthermore, by making decisive steps toward Georgia and pursuing NRCs popular among Russians, Medvedev might try to strengthen his position among the public, who generally believed that power was still in Putin's hands and that the new president followed his path, rather than pursued his own, new policy (see polls done by Levada, 2008i).

Conclusions

The role theoretical analysis shows that changes in Russia's NRCs and decisions to intervene in Georgia and recognise the independence of Abkhazia and South Ossetia had many different drivers which can be divided into long-term trends and factors that were directly related to the events in South Ossetia in the summer of 2008. This combination of various causes points to limitations of realist accounts as well as liberal ones, which assume a direct link between increasing authoritarianism and more assertive RFP. Firstly, due to NATO enlargement plans to the East, US missile defence plans, Western recognition of Kosovo and many other reasons, Russia's relations with the West deteriorated and with it the importance of the NRC of Western partner, which had been dominant during the two colour revolutions. Furthermore, rapid economic growth and the general internal strengthening of the country, influenced the leadership understanding of Russia as an increasingly important international player, which was essential for reassessment of perceptions about Russia's duties. Against this background, Georgia's attack on Tskhinvali which Moscow perceived as Western (mainly

US) efforts to increase its influence in the Caucasus at the expense of Russia, resulted in change in dominant NRCs. This shift was facilitated by changes in foreign policy decision-making processes, which led to the reduced emphasis on economic issues, and uncertain position of the new president. As a result, Russia ceased to perceive its regional role as a mediator, and began to see it as a guarantor of order, which in turn led to the adoption of NRCs such as defender of compatriots and supporter of South Ossetians. This points to some power relations between these NRCs as the replacement of mediator role by guarantor of regional order enabled the emergence of protector roles that would have been in role conflict with the NRC of regional mediator.

However, the analysis demonstrates that Russian leaders did not use these NRCs before the war which indicates that role change and foreign policy change took place simultaneously. Consequently, frequent references to assertive NRCs after the war imply their strategic use by the leadership to justify Russia's actions both domestically and especially, internationally (e.g. see Putin, 2008a). This emphasis on justification of Russia's actions to the international audience indicates that at that time expectations of Russia's significant other and more broadly, relations with Western states were still important for Russian leaders. The West unilaterally supported the Georgian side in the war which implies that it did not accept Russia's dominant NRCs that advocated protection of compatriots and South Ossetians, and expected Russia to perform less assertive roles. As such, the analysis suggests that these NRCs were so often employed after the war to convince the external audience that Russians acted in protection of compatriots and generally, people living in South Ossetia. In this way Russian leaders wanted to minimise harmful consequences of intervention and recognition of the two republics for its image and, potentially, economic situation, which points to the importance of Russia's status and some socialisation processes. More broadly, strategic use of roles implies actors' agency and indicates that structures do not mechanically determine their behaviours (see Cantir and Kaarbo, 2016, p. 17).

Furthermore, the analysis indicates the existence of temporary roles that may gain prominence due to important external events. An examination of NRCs used by the leadership in the longer period after the war can show whether NRCs, such as defender of compatriots or supporter of South Ossetians were indeed temporary, which would confirm their strategic use. Nevertheless, it is important to emphasise that the shift in dominant NRCs during the crisis and the emergence of the above NRCs, would not have been possible without important developments in international and domestic contexts, which implies that

external crises may not be sufficient for the appearance of temporary roles without deeper changes in the understanding of states' duties. In the analysed case, one of such deeper changes was the shift in Russia's self-perception that points to links between identity (self-perception) and roles, which validates distinction of these two concepts present in the role theory literature (see McCourt, 2011, 2012) and indicates that within one identity states can have many available NRCs. As such, the role theoretical framework demonstrates that from a specific identity certain new roles may arise (defender of compatriots, guarantor of regional order) and points to the shortcomings of constructivist approaches that assume a more direct link between identities and foreign policy. Further, role theory is useful to 'understand the link between the agent, the structure, and the agent's subjective perceptions of the agent-structure relationship' (Özdamar, 2016, p. 103). Indeed, this chapter shows how the leadership understanding of the international system and Russia's place in it influenced the state's foreign policy. In other words, the decision-makers' subjective perception of Russia's power and position helps to better understand Moscow's otherwise unexpected international decisions.

Finally, the leadership interpretation of events and understanding of Russia's international duties and responsibilities was largely shared by public opinion and part of Russian elites. Although Russian public favoured peacekeeper and mediator roles, it supported the dominant NRCs and the intervention in South Ossetia and as such, did not act as a constraint to foreign policy decisions. Consequently, although liberals opposed the invasion and recognition of South Ossetia and Abkhazia, they were too weak to push for NRCs of mediator and peacekeeper and exert any influence on the Russian leadership. On the other hand, stronger nationalist elites and parliamentary opposition advocated even more aggressive actions toward Georgia and having some access to politicians close to the Kremlin and some influence on public debate might contributed to the salience of NRCs such as defender of compatriots and guarantor of regional order. These examples of horizontal contestation, different opinions about Russia's roles and foreign policy as well as some ability of nationalists to shape the public debate show that foreign policy formation in Russia is a complex phenomenon including different actors with various, although limited, channels of influence. At the same time, they indicate the existence of managed pluralism in foreign policy which allows only certain views on Russia's international behaviour to enter the public debate. Furthermore, the analysis questions the assumption about the elite consensus on NRCs in non-democracies and undeniably dominant position of the president in RFP decision-

making processes. Nevertheless, the latter appears to be related to uncertain position of the new president, rather than from the weakening of the presidency in general, which will be empirically tested in the next chapter dealing with the 2014 Ukraine crisis. To conclude, apart from revealing some contestation processes which contribute to our understanding of foreign policy formation in Russia and (semi-)authoritarian states more broadly, role theory demonstrates how interactions of different external and internal as well as material and ideational factors can lead to both long-term and short-term changes in the leadership perception of their state's international duties and how they can influence changes in foreign policy behaviour.

7. The Ukraine crisis and Russia's national role conceptions

This chapter analyses dominant national role conceptions (NRCs) among the Russian leadership, opposition and public opinion during the Euromaidan revolution and crisis in Ukraine that followed. The first two sections introduce NRCs which were most often used by Russian leaders and investigate changes in their use throughout the crisis. The following sections look closer at sources of these changes at three main levels of analysis: international, domestic (including contestation processes among public opinion and Russian elites), and individual. This chapter demonstrates that significant changes in both external and internal structural factors contributed to the dominance of more assertive NRCs. In addition, it argues that shifts in dominant role conceptions and Russia's aggressive reaction to the situation in Ukraine also resulted from further changes in foreign policy decision-making processes. The analysis includes statements of Russian decision-makers (President Putin, Prime Minister Medvedev and Foreign Minister Lavrov) as well as leaders of parliamentary opposition parties (Mironov, Zhirinovsky, Zyuganov), non-parliamentary opposition (Nemtsov, Navalny, Yavlinsky) and Russian intellectuals in the period spanning from October 2013 to May 2014. As in the previous chapter, less attention was paid to the Presidential Administration and the Ministry of Defence, as their positions weakened after the departure of the influential heads, Voloshin and Ivanov respectively.

Dominant national role conceptions throughout the Ukraine crisis

The below section presents NRCs that were most frequently used by the Russian leadership during the Ukraine crisis. NRCs described below have been aggregated and presented without a division into their authors or the exact period when they were used in order to present dominant conceptions throughout the whole crisis so that they could be compared with the previous cases. The analysis of statements delivered by Russian decision-makers between October 2013 and May 2014 reveals seven main NRCs (see table 12): Defender of Russian compatriots, Supporter of Ukrainian people, Defender of the peace, Advocate of states' sovereignty, Advocate of Ukraine's independence, Supporter of international law and Promoter of the new security system in Europe. The most often the leadership spoke about the duty to defend Russians and Russian speaking minorities living abroad - 14% of all coded assertions. As Russian leaders often referred separately to the responsibility of supporting Ukrainian nation, statements expressing the duty to protect people in Crimea (75% of Russians; 97% of Russian-speaking population) and Eastern Ukraine (39-55% of Russians; 89-

93% of Russian-speaking population) (Analitik 2005) came under the first category. The five following NRCs were used almost equally often and accounted for 10-11%.

Table 13: Russia's NRCs throughout the whole analysed period (10.2013 - 05.2014)

National role conception	Frequency (abs.)	Frequency (%)
Defender of Russian compatriots	15	14%
Supporter of Ukrainian people	12	11%
Defender of the peace	12	11%
Advocate of states' sovereignty	11	10%
Advocate of Ukraine's independence	11	10%
Supporter of international law	11	10%
Promoter of the new security system in Europe	7	6%
Miscellaneous	32	28%

Source: Russian leaders' statements

The second most popular NRC, supporter of Ukrainian people, as defender of compatriots, was closely related to the events in Ukraine. The importance of both of these NRCs grew with the development of events in this country. Another NRC that was related to the events taking place in Russia's western neighbour was advocate of Ukraine's independence. This NRC was treated separately from the more general one of the same character – advocate of states' sovereignty – as statements about Ukraine's independence accounted for half of these assertions. The NRCs of defender of the peace, supporter of international law and supporter of the new security system in Europe had more general character and only partially resulted from the events in Ukraine. That said, it is important to note that these role conceptions were largely a response to Western actions and presented Russia as a counterweight to the West in the international system. As such, all the above listed NRCs had rather assertive character, especially compared to the dominant conceptions during the Rose and Orange Revolution, and did not speak about partnership or even cooperation with the West. The last category (miscellaneous) includes NRCs which were used in the analysed period at least four times but not as often as the ones listed above.

Changes in Russia's national role conceptions

Numerous shifts in the salience of Russia's NRCs can be noticed with the evolution of the events in Ukraine. In order to better present how these dominant role conceptions changed, the analysis was divided into four periods which represent different phases of the crisis. The first phase (October-November 2013) covers the time leading to the Euromaidan revolution

and was included in the analysis in order to examine Russia's NRCs before the protests and juxtapose them with those expressed in the later stages of the crisis. The second phase extends from the beginning of December 2013 to the beginning of February 2014 and includes relatively peaceful demonstrations in Kyiv. This period, as well as the following one, are important not only for the analysis of changes in NRCs during the Euromaidan crisis but, due to the similarity of events taking place in Ukraine, also for the comparative analysis with the Orange Revolution. The third period (mid-February - March 2014) embraces the climax of the crisis: bloody riots in the Maidan, the removal of President Yanukovych from power and the annexation of Crimea by Russia. The last phase stretches from April to May 2014 and on one hand, covers the ending of the greatest tensions and on the other, includes the beginning of the war in Donbas. Due to their salience, the below analysis will mainly focus on three to four most important NRCs in each period.

Russia's national role conceptions before the Euromaidan revolution

In the time leading to the Euromaidan revolution Russian leaders speaking about duties and responsibilities of their state mainly expressed general NRCs related to international situation and to a lesser extent those associated with the post-Soviet area or Ukraine (see table 13).

Table 14: Russia's NRCs before the Euromaidan revolution (10-11.2013)

National role conception	Frequency (abs.)	Frequency (%)
Advocate of states' sovereignty	7	47%
Defender of the peace	5	33%
Supporter of international cooperation	3	20%
Partner of the West	3	20%
Supporter of international law	2	13%
Promoter of traditional values	2	13%

Source: Russian leaders' statements

The NRC of **advocate of states' sovereignty** was most often used by Russian decision-makers in this period and accounted for 47% of all coded assertions. Remarkably, this NRC was not used most frequently in relation to Ukraine and the prospect of signing the Association Agreement (AA) with the EU by this country. Instead, Russian leaders most often used this NRC with regard to the Middle East and Arab Countries. For instance, Lavrov said that Russia 'insisted and continues to insist that the people of the region should primarily seek to resolve their problems themselves […] while external players must refrain from

attempts to interfere in these processes' (Lavrov, 2013f). These frequent references to the Middle East were a result of the Arab Spring, which according to some analysts (see Baker, 2017; Lipman, 2017), had a huge influence on the Russian leadership, especially President Putin. Lipman (2017) says that the Arab Spring was more evidence for Putin that 'the language of democracy, democracy promotion, popular uprising is at the same time supported by the most powerful country in the world'. Baker (2017) speaking about these events said that Putin perceived them as the US meddling in other countries affairs to the detriment of Russia.

The second most popular NRC, **defender of the peace**, was also often used in response to Western actions and in reference to a variety of different conflicts and crises around the world like Afghanistan, Syria and North Africa (see Lavrov, 2013b; Medvedev, 2013). Each time when this NRC was mentioned, Russian leaders emphasized Russia's commitment to stability as well as their contribution and support for peaceful, diplomatic settlement of conflicts. For instance, speaking about 'unilateral use of force' by the West and the fact that 'no one has proven that use of force in international affairs helps to reduce the number of civilian casualties rather than the opposite – think Libya, Afghanistan and especially Iraq', Lavrov emphasised that 'Russia consistently supports evolutionary, not revolutionary, path of development and advocates focusing international efforts on peaceful settlement of regional crises' (Lavrov, 2013b).

The two following NRCs, **supporter of international cooperation** and **partner of the West** had more cooperative character. The first one was among the most popular role conceptions only before the beginning of the Euromaidan revolution. This NRC was of a general nature and was used when Russian leaders spoke about global challenges and the possibility of responding to them only 'by collective efforts of the entire global community' (Lavrov, 2013h). Much more important for comparative analysis is the NRC of Western partner, which had been dominant during the two colour revolutions. In the analysed period this NRC was used only in reference to the EU. Both President Putin and Minister Lavrov emphasised Moscow's aim of developing cooperation with the Union, saying for example that Russia was 'interested in making these relations even more strategic, profound and multi-faceted in nature' (Lavrov, 2013i). Finally, it is important to note that the leadership also saw Russia as a defender and **promoter of traditional values**. For instance, Lavrov (2013f) spoke about superiority of Russian over Western values and stated that instead of European ones, 'we wish to keep our values, Christianity is the foundation of them'. This

emphasis on the attachment to traditional Russian values is related to the 'conservative turn' described in the section dealing with domestic factors.

Russia's national role conceptions after the beginning of the Euromaidan

The most frequently used NRCs in December 2013 and January 2014 changed in relation to the previous analysed period. While the protests continued and the crisis slowly intensified, a role conception most often used by Russian leaders concerned Ukraine's sovereignty.

Table 15: Russia's NRCs after the beginning of the Euromaidan protests (12.2013 – 01.2014)

National role conception	Frequency (abs.)	Frequency (%)
Advocate of Ukraine's sovereignty	6	27%
Supporter of Ukrainian people	4	18%
Supporter of international law	3	14%
Partner of the West	3	14%
Defender of Russian compatriots	3	14%
Defender of the peace	3	14%

Source: Russian leaders' statements

The use of the NRC of **advocate of Ukraine's independence** mainly resulted from the signing of the AA with the EU and from the intensifying crisis in Ukraine. Lavrov several times spoke about the need to respect the sovereignty of Ukraine and the choice made by the Ukrainian people (Lavrov, 2013k, 2013e). In addition, in order to juxtapose the Russian stance with the one presented by the EU, which Russia perceived as exerting pressure on Ukraine to sign the AA, Lavrov stressed that Ukraine must make its choice independently and regardless of whether the AA with the EU was signed or not, Russia would accept Kyiv's choice (Lavrov, 2013l, 2013e). Furthermore, Russian decision-makers emphasised that the Euromaidan crisis was an internal matter of Ukraine and should be resolved without any external interference (Lavrov, 2013m, 2014b). Last but not least, the dominance of this NRC can also be explained by the experience of the Orange Revolution when Russia had openly supported Yanukovych who eventually lost the presidential elections. According to the Russian Foreign Ministry 'from the start of the protests in Kiev, the Russian side advocated a policy of non-interference in the internal political processes of Ukraine.... Because we knew full well what the consequences would be if the situation got out of hand' (Surnacheva et al., 2014).

In this period decision-makers in the Kremlin began to speak about **support for Ukrainian people** emphasising Russia's duties related to aid and protection in face of

problems and threats Ukrainians were facing. This NRC was not used by Russian leaders in the first analysed period but its significance grew with the intensification of protests and deterioration of the economic situation in Ukraine. The historical and spiritual closeness of Ukraine to Russia was one of the main sources of this NRC and was clearly emphasised by Lavrov who said that Ukraine was Russia's 'neighbour, partner, friend and brother' (Lavrov, 2014b) and who mentioned 'ageless Christian truth' which told Russia to help 'close neighbour and fraternal people' (Lavrov, 2013l). The closeness of the two nations was also emphasized in Putin's speeches when he talked about support for Ukrainian people. Justifying the decision to extend the loan to Ukraine and to reduce the gas prices, Putin mentioned Russia's particular relationship with Ukraine and explained that 'if we really say that it [Ukraine] is a fraternal nation and a fraternal country, then we should act the way close family members do and support the Ukrainian people in this difficult situation' (Putin, 2013). Furthermore, Putin (2014) emphasized that both the loan and decrease in energy prices were based on Russia's 'wish to provide support – not to a particular government, but to the Ukrainian nation'.

Russian leaders talked about the need to **support international law** almost as often as support for the Ukrainian nation. For instance, Lavrov (2013k) stated that Russia did not pretend to any 'super-positions in the global diplomatic landscape' but wished to be a leader 'in the defence of international law and principles stipulated in the UN Charter'. Thus, as in the first period when Lavrov (2013l) said that his country could not imagine development of international cooperation in different areas without respect and observation of international law and that 'maintaining and strengthening international lawfulness' was one of Russia's international priorities, this NRC had rather general character. However, apart from the general idea of Russia as a defender of international law, this NRC was related to the events in Ukraine and presented Russia as a supporter of the solution to the Ukrainian crisis within the constitutional and legal framework (Lavrov, 2014b). Despite numerous disagreements with Western leaders over Ukraine and criticism of the EU's actions in this country, Russian decision-makers still talked about **partnership with the West**, precisely with the EU. In the analysed period Lavrov mentioned the strategic partnership relations three times (2013m, 2013l, 2014) and stated that Russia attached great importance to cooperation with the EU. In addition, he said that there was 'no question of whether to develop or not to develop our [Russia's] partnership with the EU' (Lavrov, 2014b) and that there existed mutual interests in the deepening of partnership (Lavrov, 2013d).

Finally, in December 2013, for the first time in the analysed case study, Russian leaders mentioned the state's responsibility to protect Russians and Russian-speaking minorities living abroad. However, the NRC of **defender of compatriots** was not used in relation to the situation in Ukraine. Instead, Lavrov (2013l, 2013n) twice talked in general terms about protection of rights and legal interests of Russian nationals as the most important part of the state's foreign policy. Likewise, Putin (2013) spoke about the duty to protect the status of compatriots in several EU countries, particularly in the Baltic States. He said that Russia 'will continue fighting for equal rights. […] But it does not at all mean we are going to swing our swords and bring in the troops. That is simply nonsense; there is nothing like this now and never will be' (Putin, 2013). Putin's statement about the peaceful way of defending compatriots living abroad is particularly interesting in the context of Russia's future decisions.

Russia's national role conceptions during the deterioration of the situation in Ukraine and the annexation of Crimea

The NRCs expressed by Russian leaders in February and March 2014 changed in relation to December 2013 - January 2014 and significantly changed compared with October-November 2013. In general, one can notice lower activity of Russian leaders in the media in the second half of February and almost no comments on Ukraine in the period when the decisive events were taking place in this country. This may suggest that the Russian leadership was surprised by the development of events in Kyiv and was considering the most appropriate reactions.

Table 16: Russia's NRCs after the aggravation of the situation in Ukraine (02-03.2014)

National role conception	Frequency (abs.)	Frequency (%)
Defender of Russian compatriots	5	24%
Supporter of Ukrainian people	5	24%
Advocate of Ukraine's sovereignty	4	19%
Supporter of the new security system in Europe	3	14%
Supporter of international law	2	10%
Defender of the peace	2	10%

Source: Russian leaders' statements

For the first time since the outbreak of protests in Kyiv the most often expressed NRC was that of **defender of Russian compatriots**. After the relatively quiet period, at the beginning of March Lavrov (2014b) spoke about decisions restricting the rights of language minorities, requests to restrict or punish the use of Russian and conditions of threats of violent action on behalf of ultranationalists - factors that threatened the life of Russian

nationals and staff of the Black Sea Fleet and required their protection. Putin said that if Russia saw uncontrolled crime spreading to the eastern region of Ukraine, having the official request from the legitimate President, he retained 'the right to use all available means' to protect people living there (Putin, 2014b). Two weeks later in his speech addressed to State Duma deputies, Federation Council members and heads of Russian regions Putin referred to 'the Russian-speaking Crimea' and said that Russia could not have betrayed those who opposed the 'coup' in Ukraine and 'were immediately threatened with repression' (Putin, 2014c).

Equally often Russian leaders spoke about **support for Ukrainian people.** For instance, Putin said that protecting people with whom Russia had close historical, cultural and economic ties was in Russia's national interests and that Russia 'cannot remain indifferent if we see that they [Ukrainians] are being persecuted, destroyed and humiliated' (Putin, 2014b). Likewise, Lavrov (2014c) stated that Russia would 'do everything to prevent bloodshed, attempts on the life and health' of those who lived in Ukraine clearly presenting his state as a protector of all Ukrainians, not only those who speak Russian. Furthermore, in his first speech after the removal of Yanukovych from power, Lavrov (2014d) said that Russia's main task was 'to help the fraternal Ukrainian people'. However, during this speech he talked in a very moderate tone saying that Russia was waiting for the new government and its programme to be formed, which again suggests that after the unexpected events of 21/22 February Russian leaders (or Lavrov - see more in the section on decision-making processes) did not have any clear strategy and did not know in which way RFP decisions should go. The reasons for the use of the third most popular NRC, advocate of Ukraine's independence, were similar to those in December 2013 and January 2014 but now Russian leaders more directly referred to West's actions and policies in Ukraine which they perceived as undertaken for geopolitical gains (see Lavrov, 2014f, 2014e). Finally, as during the 2008 war in Georgia, Russian leaders spoke about their support for the new security system in Europe and about the need for the principle of indivisibility of security.

Russia's national role conceptions at the beginning of the war in Donbas

As in the previous analysed period, **defender of Russian compatriots** was the most frequently used NRC by Russian leaders. It was very often employed especially by Putin who, justifying the decision to annex Crimea, said that 'the most obvious risk was that the Russian speaking population was threatened and that the threats were absolutely specific and tangible'(Putin, 2014d). Furthermore, he added that Russia had never intended to annex Crimea but when

Russians leaving there began to be threatened and oppressed, 'when they began raising the issue of self-determination – that's when we sat down to decide what to do. It was at this exact moment that we decided to support Crimeans, and not 5, 10 or 20 years ago'(Putin, 2014d).

Table 17: Russia's NRCs at the beginning of the war in Donbas (04-05.2014)

National role conception	Frequency (abs.)	Frequency (%)
Defender of Russian compatriots	6	43%
Supporter of Ukrainian people	3	21%
Supporter of international law	3	21%
Defender of the peace	2	14%

Source: Russian leaders' statements

However, answering a question about 'the red lines' and explaining the motivations behind the annexation, Putin stated that above all Russia wanted to support the residents of Crimea, but admitted that other factors also played role. He said that the decision was 'partially prompted' by the US missile defence system and that Russia 'followed certain logic: if we don't do anything, Ukraine will be drawn into NATO sometime in the future. We'll be told: "This doesn't concern you," and NATO ships will dock in Sevastopol' (Putin, 2014d). In addition, as in the previous period, the leadership continued to speak about Russia's responsibilities to support Ukrainian people and defend international law. Overall, the above analysis demonstrates significant changes in the distribution of dominant NRCs. The following sections look closer at sources of these shifts dividing them into three levels of analysis: international, domestic and individual, which focuses on foreign policy decision-making processes in Russia.

International level of analysis and increasing competition with the West

International and regional contexts on the eve of the Euromaidan revolution were far less favourable than before the Orange and especially the Rose Revolution. Cooperation and good relations with the West were a distant memory and were replaced by competition on various fronts. After the Five-Day War, which further deteriorated the already weakened mutual trust, the chance to improve relations surprisingly quickly reappeared when the new US administration proposed to the new Russian President a policy of 'reset' in mutual relations. Despite some initial successes, such as the signing of the new START (Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty), relations quickly deteriorated due to many misunderstandings and

disagreements. One of the main bones of contention were uprisings in Arab countries, later called the Arab Spring, which gained Western support. However, in Russia these protests were seen as another wave of colour revolutions and Western meddling in internal affairs of sovereign states (e.g. see Lipman, 2017). The significance of these events increased even more after the mass protests in Russia in 2011/12 (see the next section). Against this background, Russia began to see its role as an advocate of states' sovereignty and independence.

In addition, the time leading to the Euromaidan revolution was a period of increased geo-economic competition in the post-Soviet space. Russia's plans for economic integration of this region in the form of the Eurasian Economic Union (EUU) overlapped with the development of the European Union's programmes toward this area (see Cadier, 2015, p. 171). Ukraine was supposed to be the key member of the Moscow-led EUU and in this context the beginning of the mass protests after Yanukovych's refusal to sign the AA with the EU was understood in Russia as another attempt of Western interference in the internal affairs of post-Soviet states (see Lavrov, 2013e). The prospect of signing of the AA between Ukraine and the EU as well as mass protests which started in Kyiv resulted in the emphasis on Russia's responsibility to support Ukraine's sovereignty.

Situation in Ukraine and negative perception of the Ukrainian opposition

Furthermore, since the bloody clashes in Kyiv in which more than 100 people died (Kyivpost, 2014), rejection of a compromise between Yanukovych and opposition by Maidan protesters and ousting the Ukrainian president from power, the Russian leadership began to speak more often about Russia's duty to defend compatriots living in Ukraine. With time Russian decision-makers also started to emphasise their state's responsibility to support (and protect) Ukrainian people (see Lavrov, 2014d; Putin, 2014b). One of the factors which contributed to the dominance of these two NRCs was a very negative image of the Ukrainian opposition, especially compared the leaders of the two colour revolutions. The perception of the nationalist Svoboda party, whose leader, Oleh Tyahnybok, was one of the main faces of the Euromaidan, was particularly negative. For instance, Lavrov talked about the Svoboda members who 'say that Russian and Russian-speaking people are Ukraine's enemies, that they should be shot and killed, that they are not people, but "beings"' (Lavrov, 2014h). Such a negative opinion about the new Ukrainian leaders resulted from their openly anti-Russian attitude and lack of, in contrast to the leaders of the Rose and Orange Revolution, statements about the need and desire to build relations with Russia. This Manichean picture of the

situation in Ukraine and its main actors influenced the rational assessment of the situation and narrowed the Russian leadership room for manoeuvre (see Lukyanov in Surnacheva et al., 2014).

Last but by no means least, in general, the character of the Euromaidan revolution was different compared to the two colour revolutions. Both the Rose and the Orange Revolutions were largely peaceful in contrast to the Euromaidan events which claimed more than 100 casualties. In addition, contrary to the previous mass demonstrations in the post-Soviet space, the 2013/14 protests were not an electoral revolution and did not start with accusations of rigged elections which could have increased anxiety among Russian leaders. Finally, quickly after his victory Yushchenko assured that the rights of Russian speaking minority would be respected while just after gaining power in February 2014, the new Ukrainian government approved a bill that lowered the official status of the Russian language and intended to make Ukrainian the sole state language at all levels (BBC, 2014). As evidenced in Russian leaders' statements, these events influenced their perceptions of Russia's international duties and responsibilities and contributed to the strategic use of the NRC of defender of compatriots that was employed to justify the annexation of Crimea. All in all, an increasingly unfavourable international context as well as the situation in Ukraine were important sources behind the dominant NRCs. Nevertheless, I argue that the emergence of more assertive NRCs would not have been possible without important changes in the domestic situation in Russia.

Domestic level of analysis and the 'conservative turn'

The domestic situation in Russia was significantly different not only compared to the period before the colour revolutions but also before the 2008 war. First, economic growth did not return to its pre-crisis level and although it quickly recovered after catastrophic 2009 (-7,8%), the Russian economy just as quickly began to stagnate again (Macrotrends, 2020). This economic slowdown ended the period of the so-called social contract between the authorities and society that had taken place in the 2000s, that is years of extremely rapid economic development. The contract meant that the public would give up some political freedoms and would stay away from politics in exchange for economic growth (Guriev, 2015, p. 9). In addition, after a decade of unprecedented development the memory of the difficult and chaotic 1990s, the contrast of which strengthened the perception of Putin's successes,

was increasingly distant. These factors weakened the regime's legitimacy which suffered even more as a result of the demonstrations in 2011 and 2012.

Putin's announcement of his return to the presidency and the rigged parliamentary elections in December 2011 led to mass protests in major Russian cities. Unlike previous large protests against the pension benefits reform in 2005, these had political motives, were aimed at the authorities, and had support of a large part of the Russian middle class. These protests took place soon after the uprisings in Arab countries and likewise, were considered by the leadership as Western meddling in Russia's internal affairs. They were also an important and alarming signal to the Russian authorities that another wave of colour revolutions might be finally coming to Russia (see Lipman, 2017). As such, these events also contributed to the dominance of NRC that advocated states' sovereignty.

Further weakening legitimacy, the loss of support of part of the middle class and decreasing approval ratings which in 2013 were at the lowest level since the beginning of the Putin's presidency (see Gutterman, 2013) led the regime to seek new support base among more conservative people from rural areas and to divert attention from internal problems by emphasizing Russian traditional values and uniqueness. This 'conservative turn' meant more nationalist narrative which shifted emphasis from economic and developmental to ideological issues. In the field of foreign policy, it manifested itself in more emphasis on Russia's distinctiveness from the West, which can be noticed in different understanding of Russia's international responsibilities and which contributed to the perception of Russia's role as an advocate of states' sovereignty. Consequently, even more 'neutral' NRCs, such as defender of the peace and supporter of international law were often employed to present the contrast between the attitude and actions of Russia and the West, and to emphasise Russia's 'proper' behaviour that aims to fix Western mistakes in the international arena. Last but not least, increased nationalist rhetoric during the conservative turn created a context in which the emergence of NRCs such as defender of compatriots and supporter of (threatened) Ukrainian people was natural and even expected.

Sense of insecurity and betrayal

Furthermore, it is important to note that the Arab Spring and perceived Western interference in Russia's internal affairs further increased disappointment with the West and mutual relations after unsuccessful reset, and strengthened the perception of neglect of Russia's interests. Against this background, the failure to meet the agreement between the Ukrainian opposition and President Yanukovych (which, as Zygar (2016, p. 267) notes, Putin told

Yanukovych to sign) that was to be guaranteed by the West as well as removal of Yanukovych from power, led to a sense of betrayal among Russian leaders (see also Gal'perovich, 2015). This disappointment with the West and its behaviour can be seen in Putin's statements. He said, for example, that Western leaders 'lied to us many times, made decisions behind our backs, placed us before an accomplished fact' and added that 'our western partners have crossed the line, playing the bear and acting irresponsibly and unprofessionally' (Putin, 2014c).

In addition, frequent statements about Russia's support for the new security system in Europe (the NRC especially often used during the highest tensions in Ukraine) and emphasis on indivisibility of security indicate that apart from general dissatisfaction with the state of mutual relations with the West, the events in Ukraine and Western support for it increased the sense of insecurity among the Russian leadership. Already before the Five-Day War Russian decision-makers spoke about the inapplicability of contemporary security system in Europe and the war in South Ossetia only strengthened this perception. This belief, and consequently, the sense of insecurity was strengthened even further with the events in Ukraine which were perceived as another Western encroachment in Russian sphere of influence. After the regime change in Kyiv this sense of insecurity took real dimensions for Russian leaders as it could have meant the loss of the strategically important Crimea and, above all, the Black Sea fleet stationed there. As such, the sense of betrayal and insecurity was another factor that contributed to a reassessment of Russia's international duties and to the dominance of the defender of compatriots role conception in the second part of the analysed period. The following sections explore domestic debates over Russia's NRCs and examine whether conceptions used by the leadership were contested by public opinion and Russian elites.

Vertical role contestation

Context

Before the Ukraine crisis, 33% of Russians, asked about Russia's potential position in case of war between USA and Syria, answered that Russia should act as a mediator of a peaceful settlement (Levada, 2013d). It was by far the most popular answer that showed what role the public opinion expected from Russia in the international arena. Furthermore, shortly before the beginning of the Euromaidan, asked about Russia's relations with Ukraine, 55% of respondents said that Russia and Ukraine should be independent but friendly states and only

16% that Russia and Ukraine should unite in one state (Levada, 2013e). However, answering another question 35% of respondents said that it would be most beneficial for their country if Ukraine was under the economic and political control of Russia and 61% that they did not consider Ukraine as a foreign country (Levada, 2013e). The above, sometimes contradictory, answers show how complex are Russians' attitudes toward Ukraine.

Consequently, in mid-November 2013, when asked about their attitude toward the AA between Ukraine and the EU, 50% of Russians answered that it was neutral, saying that this was an internal matter of Ukraine. 30% of respondents were negative, perceiving it as a betrayal of Slavic unity and saying that Ukraine should instead join the Customs Union with Russia (Levada, 2013f). These results demonstrate that before the beginning of the Euromaidan revolution half of Russians considered Ukraine to be a sovereign state and suggest that at that time, with negative view of only 30% of people, it could have been risky for the Russian leadership to take any decisive actions toward Ukraine.

Attitudes toward the Ukraine crisis and Russia's roles

In December 2013 only 8% of respondents positively perceived protesters on Maidan and the majority of Russians had rather negative attitudes toward the protesters. In addition, 28% of Russians were irritated by the actions of the leadership of Western countries which, in their opinion, were exerting political pressure on Ukraine, while 40% believed that Ukrainians took part in the demonstrations due to the influence of the West seeking to draw Ukraine into the orbit of its political interests (Levada, 2013g). Consequently, at the end of January, 84% of Russians perceived the situation in Kyiv as an attempt of a violent coup d'état and only 4% as peaceful demonstrations (Levada, 2014b). With the development of events in Ukraine even less Russians perceived the protesters positively and even more believed that Ukrainians took part in the demonstrations due to the influence of the West (Levada, 2014d). Such perception of these events made it easier for the Russian authorities to promote certain NRCs as they could have easily justified the need for protection of not only Russian compatriots but also Ukrainian people from Western enemies and nationalists from Kyiv. Goryashko (2014) claims that these perceptions were not accidental and resulted from an 'image of the enemy' which had been quickly created for the new Ukrainian authorities by the Russian media. However, this image also created a certain threat for Russian authorities as after such presentation of Ukrainian authorities, Russian citizens could be disappointed if Russia did not take active steps in Ukraine.

As far as perceptions of Russia's roles are concerned, Lev Gudkov (2014), director of Levada Center, pointed out that the majority of Russians supported the return of Crimea to Russia, which may indicate support for great power role. Gudkov also stated that 'until recently 70% of respondents said that Russia should avoid the use of force in order to solve the Ukrainian crisis' (Gudkov, 2014a). At first glance, these results may seem contradictory as on the one hand, Russians supported the great power role and on the other, a non-interventionist position and peaceful solution to the conflict. However, these results may suggest that for Russians great power role does not necessarily have to involve the use of force, and consequently, the annexation of Crimea did not necessarily mean military operation. Furthermore, at the beginning of March, 43% of Russians (the relative majority) agreed that Russians in Ukraine were threatened by nationalists and only Russian troops could protect them from the threat of violence (28% supported political solution and negotiations). In addition, 44% said that the introduction of Russian troops to Ukraine would be helpful for the stabilization of the situation and peaceful resolution of the crisis (Levada, 2014e). These responses indicate significant support for the NRC of defender of compatriots among the Russian public.

However, in the same survey, asked about the position which should be taken by their country with respect to the situation in Ukraine, 37% of Russians said that Russia should act as one of the international mediators of a political settlement. 17% answered that Russia should not interfere in the development of events in Ukraine, 12% that Russia should start to establish cooperation with the transitional Ukrainian government and only 21% that Moscow should intervene militarily to prevent clashes and bloodshed in Crimea and east of Ukraine (Levada, 2014e). Answers to this question suggest that when being able to choose different roles, the majority of Russians preferred their country to act as a mediator. They also demonstrate the reluctance of public opinion to endorse military intervention. As such, the above answers may provide one of the explanations why there has been no official military intervention in Donbas and why Russia confessed to 'little green men' in Crimea only after a peaceful resolution of the situation (at the end of March 2014 still only 9% of respondents thought that 'green men' in Crimea were Russian troops (Levada, 2014f)).

As for the annexation itself, 79% of respondents agreed that after the referendum, Crimean Peninsula should be incorporated into the Russian Federation (85,7% according to FBK, 2014) (Levada, 2014e) and after it took place, more than 90% of Russians considered this decision correct (VTSIOM, 2014). Explaining such high support for the annexation of

Crimea, Zygar (2018) points to the 'consensus in Russia that Crimea is ours' (Krymnashism). Indeed, Crimea should be treated as a separate case because it has always been considered as 'Khrushchev's mistake' (in 1954 he transferred the Peninsula to the Ukrainian SSR) and since 1990 from 80 to 84% of Russians believed that it should be returned to Russia (Gudkov, 2014b). Consequently, from the beginning of the crisis a vast majority of Russians were in favour of returning the peninsula to the Russian Federation, at no time there was any significant, visible, contestation of this decision and surveys show that Russians did not even associate it with the risk of military operation.

However, 67% of Russians were also for accession of other Ukrainian regions if so decided in referendum by people living there, while 58% claimed that Russia must protect its compatriots and therefore has the right to the accession of the territories of the former Soviet republics (Levada, 2014g). These findings once again indicate public support for protection of Russian compatriots and annexation of territories for this purpose but not at the expense of military operation. As such, with the authorities' unwillingness to act against public opinion it suggests that public views could have been one of the factors that contributed to the annexation of Crimea but at the same time prevented the Kremlin from (at least official) military engagement in Donbass.

To sum up, before the Euromaidan revolution, Ukraine's potential integration with the EU was neutrally received by Russians who considered it as an internal matter of Ukraine. Furthermore, until mid-February 2014, the majority of Russians believed that Russia should not interfere in the internal affairs of Ukraine (Gudkov, 2014b). However, with the escalation of the events (and their presentation in the Russian media) public opinion started to change their views on possible solutions to the crisis. The majority of Russians believed that their compatriots living in Crimea and Eastern Ukraine were threatened by Ukrainian nationalists and, therefore, began to support defender of compatriots role. However, rallies in Moscow and St. Petersburg on March 2 (each drew hundreds of participants (Bigg 2014)) against Putin's declaration that Russia had the right to invade neighbouring Ukraine indicate a lack of acceptance of military intervention under the pretext of protecting compatriots among part of Russian society. In addition, opinion polls show that although the majority of Russians supported their country's duty to defend Russian-speaking minority living in Ukraine, they primarily expected from Russia the role of a mediator (as in the case of Syrian crisis), while only 21% were in favour of military intervention to prevent clashes and bloodshed in Ukraine

(Levada, 2014e) and 83% were concerned with the possibility of an armed conflict between Russia and Ukraine (Levada, 2014h).

From the above analysis several important points emerge. Firstly, the analysis demonstrates some contestation of the main NRCs but at the same time, it shows that the majority of Russians supported NRCs advocated by the leadership with the provision that the public was generally against military intervention in Ukraine. Second, it indicates that huge public support might have been a contributing factor to the decision about the annexation. Third, and more generally, the analysis shows that Russian authorities did not act against the public moods which may be a factor behind the Kremlin's unwillingness for official military intervention in Donbass. These findings indicate that public opinion does not play key role in shaping RFP but may act as a push or a constraint for foreign policy decisions. As such, the public in hybrid regimes may be no less important for shaping foreign policy than in democracies.

Horizontal role contestation

This section begins with the investigation of contestation processes among the Russian leadership, continues analysing statements made by the parliamentary and non-parliamentary opposition and in the last part deals with Russian intelligentsia.

Intra-Kremlin contestation?

Although during the Ukraine crisis President Putin and Foreign Minister Lavrov referred to similar NRCs, one can notice considerable differences in the frequency of the used roles. Putin definitely most often spoke about the duty to defend Russian compatriots living abroad which accounted for almost a third of all NRCs used by him[9]. The Russian President also referred to Russia's responsibility to support and protect Ukrainian people (18%) as well as to the need to support international law (9%). NRCs used by Lavrov were more diverse. He most often talked about Russia's duty to advocate Ukraine's sovereignty (14%), NRC which Putin did not use even once. In addition, Lavrov spoke about Russia as a defender of the peace (11%) and advocate of states' sovereignty (10%). The NRC of defender of compatriots living abroad accounted for only 6% of all used by Lavrov and he talked almost equally rarely about Russia's duty to support Ukrainian people (7%, as in case of the NRC of Western partner). These findings are particularly interesting in the context of changes in RFP decision-

[9] Of all NRCs which were coded at least twice for each leader.

making processes and lack of Lavrov's involvement in decision to annex Crimea (see the last section of this chapter).

In general, Lavrov's statements were more moderate. In the middle of the crisis and shortly before the bloody events on Maidan, he talked about the strategic partnership between Russia and the EU and about shared 'goal of creating a common economic and humanitarian area' (Lavrov, 2014i). Furthermore, just after the key developments in Kyiv and removal of Yanukovych from power, he mentioned the 'wish to understand who will be part of the new Ukrainian government, which is being formed, and what its programme […] will be' (Lavrov, 2014e). A week later, Putin spoke in a completely different tone several times mentioning Russia's readiness to support Russian speaking people living in Crimea and south-eastern Ukraine and emphasising that Russia retained 'the right to use all available means to protect those people' (Putin, 2014b). Furthermore, answering journalists' questions following Direct Line, Putin again emphasised Russia's duty to protect people in south-eastern Ukraine saying that 'we ought to do everything we can to help these people defend their rights…This is what we will fight for' and reminding that 'the Federation Council of Russia gave the President the right to use the Armed Forces in Ukraine' (Putin, 2014d). The same day answering similar questions Lavrov said nothing about protecting Russian compatriots living in Ukraine, even though he mentioned that Russia was 'concerned about the discriminatory attitude of the current authorities to Russian and Russian-speaking population' (Lavrov, 2014j). Furthermore, he took rather anti-interventionist position and emphasised that Russia did not want to introduce troops into Ukraine. As the above statements may have resulted from some strategic rather than genuine differences, various audiences or from the Lavrov's diplomatic function and Putin's focus on internal politics they do not prove the existence of contestation between the two leaders. These differences may also point to the mechanisms of managed pluralism (Balzer, 2003) and decision-makers' attempts to test public support for different conceptions. Nevertheless, these examples reveal puzzling differences and suggest an area for future research.

A similar pattern can be noticed in the analysis of statements delivered by Putin and Prime Minister Medvedev. Even though Medvedev rarely took part in discussions on foreign policy issues, when he did, rather than speaking about the need to protect Russian compatriots living in Ukraine, he said that it was 'important to think about development within current political and legal realities' and that Russia did 'not want to aggravate the situation' (Medvedev, 2014). The above statements may be an example of disagreements

between these two leaders. According to McFaul (2018) Medvedev and Putin 'used to disagree about the nature of what it meant to be a great power in Russia and […] in the former Soviet Union'. Furthermore, McFaul (2018) points to differences between the two leaders on foreign policy issues such as US airbase in Kyrgyzstan, sanctions against Iran and the most well-known, UN security council resolution regarding flying zone over Libya in 2011 when Medvedev abstained from voting which was criticised by Putin.

Parliamentary Opposition and more radical propositions

The analysis of parliamentary opposition focuses on statements of three politicians: Gennady Zyuganov, leader of the Communist Party (the second biggest party in the Russian Duma), Vladimir Zhirinovsky, leader of the nationalist LDPR and Sergei Mironov, leader of A Just Russia Party. Although nominally in opposition, all of these parties are considered to have ties with the Kremlin and this is reflected in many statements of their leaders. However, they also presented some opinions that were inconsistent with the Kremlin's line and which contested NRCs presented by the Russian leadership. In particular Zyuganov and Zhirinovsky supported a more interventionist foreign policy and Russia' great power status which 'guarantees the well-being of our people, peace and security on the whole planet' (Zyuganov, 2013). Already at the beginning of the Ukraine crisis, Zhirinovsky suggested that the country's role should not be limited to defend Russian people leaving in Ukraine but in addition, Russia should take back its historical lands. He proposed some territorial solutions which could be based on the spoken language saying that 'where Russians live in Ukraine, there should be Russia' (Zhirinovsky, 2013). Furthermore, he questioned the policy of assisting other post-Soviet states and said that Russia's role was to be a strong country, an example to follow for other states so that they would gravitate toward Russia.

During the highest tensions in Ukraine, Zyuganov, Zhirinovsky and Mironov (to a lesser extent) used similar language and envisaged similar roles, expecting Russia to play a more active part in the internal politics of Ukraine. For instance, Zyuganov (2014) said that 'Russia cannot dispassionately watch a neo-Nazi, Russophobic and anti-Semitic regime being formed on its borders. The Russian leadership has everything that is necessary to stop Ukraine sliding into a civil war and anti-people dictatorship'. In addition, he directly referred to the duty to protect Russian compatriots and said that Russia should 'ensure guarantees of the rights of Russian citizens and the Russian-speaking population of Ukraine' and must 'support popular resistance and self-organization of the masses in protecting their personal and social security in some south-eastern regions' (Zyuganov, 2014a). Furthermore, Zyuganov (2014a) urged the

Russian President ‘to issue a warning that the Russian side reserves the right to freedom of action in defence of its interests’. Mironov was another party leader who supported NRCs of defender of compatriots and supporter of the Ukrainian people. He stated that Russia should react militarily in case of the use of armed forces in south-eastern Ukraine by Kyiv (Mironov, 2014b). He also said that Ukraine could not exist as a unitary state any more suggesting that Russia should support separatist aspirations in Donbass (Mironov, 2014a).

Zhirinovsky (2014) used a similar narrative to Zyuganov about the new Ukrainian authorities calling them ‘renegades and traitors’ and comparing Tyahnybok, leader of the nationalist Svoboda party, to Hitler. He also spoke about Russia’s responsibility to protect compatriots living in Ukraine and about the need to intervene in Ukraine’s internal affairs. In addition, he said that Russia needed ‘to send 2-3 divisions to Crimea’ to protect the Black Sea fleet and that ‘Crimea along with the southeast should forever return to Russia’ (Zhirinovsky, 2014a). Moreover, Zhirinovsky (2014) openly proposed the division of Ukraine into three parts. Speaking about interference in the Ukraine’s internal affairs and suggesting to divide the country, he openly contested prevailing at that time NRC advocating Ukraine’s sovereignty. Last but not least, Zhirinovsky praised the Russian leadership for organising the referendum in Crimea but once again went a step further than authorities saying that the Kremlin ‘should take not only Crimea, but the whole Ukraine’ (Zhirinovsky, 2014b). Zyuganov after some tragic events in Ukraine said that it was necessary to ‘recognize officially the Donetsk and the Luhansk People’s Republics’ and, in case of other similar events, to demand the president of Russia to ‘use armed forces for the protection of the life and freedom of the civilians’ (Zyuganov, 2014c). As such, both politicians questioned the Kremlin's official line which did not intend to either recognize the Donetsk and the Luhansk republics or to officially launch military actions against pro-Maidan forces. Although Zyuganov and especially Zhirinovsky, are not completely independent from the authorities, these nationalist and populist leaders are popular in Russia and are among the most trusted politicians (Levada, 2014a, 2014i) and, consequently, contestation from their side might not have been meaningless.

Last but not least, analysing parliamentary opposition it is important to mention Ilya Ponomarev, who was the only member of parliament to vote against the admission of Crimea to the Russian Federation (the famous 443:1 vote). He justified his decision saying that Russia had enough power in Crimea to protect the Russian-speaking population, and it was not necessary to annex the peninsula (Ponomarev, 2014). In the aftermath of the vote,

Ponomarev was described as national traitor, accused of embezzlement and now lives in exile (Taylor, 2015).

Divisions among non-parliamentary opposition

While the position on the Ukraine crisis and especially on the annexation of Crimea was rather unilateral among the parliamentary opposition, the same cannot be said about the non-systemic opposition that was divided over the Kremlin's actions towards Ukraine and NRCs pursued by the leadership during the crisis. Several groups, which marched with the opposition in 2011/2012 protests, during the Euromaidan revolution supported Russian authorities and their decisions towards Ukraine (Mackinnon, 2014). Nationalist leader Eduard Limonov, who had been jailed in the past for taking part in anti-Kremlin protests, spoke out in favour of the regime's policies and said that Russia should recover all the territories which had been lost after the collapse of the Soviet Union. The Left Front, another group which had taken part in the 2011-2012 protests, organized pickets outside the Ukrainian embassy in Moscow, demanding it to recognize Russia's right to Crimea. As Oleg Kozlovsky, one of Oborona, an anti-Putin movement, leaders, said 'on the left and on the right, there are people who support [the annexation of Crimea] – the left because they see it as the USSR coming back, the right because they support the ethnic nationalist part of the campaign' (Mackinnon, 2014).

Ambiguous opinions were also voiced by leaders of the Russian opposition. Aleksei Navalny, one of the most active critics of the Kremlin, said that 'the realities are such that Crimea is now part of the Russian Federation…It will remain part of Russia and will never become part of Ukraine in the foreseeable future' (Navalny, 2014). However, apart from statements about Crimea, Navalny was critical about Russia's role in the Ukrainian conflict saying that it caused colossal damage to Russia in a strategic perspective (Navalny, 2014a). Furthermore, he (Navalny 2014b) contested the NRC of defender of compatriots suggesting that it was invented and saying that in recent years there had been hundreds of cases of real violations of Russians' rights but this time the regime felt threatened. He added that the state rhetoric about the protection of compatriots was lies and opposed the actions in Ukraine saying that it was an 'imperialist war' that was damaging to the interests of the Russian people (Navalny, 2014b). Consequently, contrary to NRCs presented by Russian leaders, Navalny several times said that Russia should become a European state (2014c, 2014a) as well as mentioned Russia's duty to develop internally and Russia's future role as a member of European community (Navalny, 2014; Navalny, 2014b).

Another opposition leader, Boris Nemtsov, co-chair of the liberal Republican Party of Russia – People's Freedom Party (RPR-PARNAS) was critical of the Kremlin's actions from the beginning of the Ukraine crisis. He openly expressed his support for Russia's European path and criticised Russia's interference in Ukrainian affairs (Nemtsov, 2013b, 2013a). Furthermore, Nemtsov was one of a few Russian politicians who did not speak about Russia's duty to defend compatriots living in Ukraine and one of a few who openly criticised the annexation of Crimea saying that Russia was 'sinking into lies, violence, obscurantism and imperial hysteria' (Nemtsov, 2014). Grigory Yavlinsky, a liberal oppositionist, openly supported Russia's internal development through integration with Europe and criticised Russia's actions in Ukraine (Yavlinsky 2014). He contested Russia's role in the Eurasian space, calling it 'homegrown Eurasianism' as well as RFP focused at this region and blamed the Kremlin for creating an anti-European vector which was responsible for the crisis in Ukraine. Furthermore, Yavlinsky contested the annexation of Crimea and potential similar actions in other regions under the pretext of defending the Russian-speaking population (Yavlinsky 2014).

Russian intellectuals

Although Russian elites, including almost all public intellectuals who can be considered neo-imperialists such as Alexander Dugin and Alexander Prokhanov (see Zevelev, 2014), largely supported Russia's policy toward Ukraine, there were some voices of contestation. Opposition and human rights activists quickly accused Putin of bringing Russia to the brink of war with Ukraine (Bigg, 2014). Andrei Zubov, a prominent political analyst and professor at the prestigious Moscow State Institute of International Relations (MGIMO - an academic institution run by the Russian MFA), compared the case of Crimea to the Anschluss of Austria. He harshly criticised the Russian leadership for the annexation and narrative about the duty to protect compatriots living abroad openly calling Russia's actions aggression (Zubov 2014). A similar opinion was presented by a Russian political columnist Yevgeny Ikhlov who said that Putin decided on such steps 'because of the example of a democratic revolution in neighboring Ukraine - where there will be lustration, the exposure of corruption, free elections'. He explained that such an example 'would show the population of the Russian Federation how all that can be normal' (RFERL, 2014). Tatyana Vorozheykina, Russian sociologist and political scientist, appealed 'against war and the restoration of totalitarianism' justifying it with her disappointment with the leadership actions that had broken all the rules occupying the territory of an independent neighbouring country and

refusing to recognize its right to exist (Vorozheykina in Kara-Murza, 2014). Rock musician Yuri Shevchuk criticised the Kremlin's actions which, in his opinion, might lead to fraternal bloodshed and revolution in Russia (Bigg, 2014). Finally, Mikhail Khodorkovsky, former Yukos chief, said that Crimea must remain a part of Ukraine but should be offered a higher degree of autonomy. Khodorkovsky described Russia's intervention in the peninsula as 'flagrant interference in the affairs of a historically friendly country' (Khodorkovsky, 2014).

To sum up, the above analysis confirmed the existence of some role contestation among the elites during the Ukraine crisis. The parliamentary opposition supported the defender of compatriots role and had even referred to this NRC before it became regularly used by Russian decision-makers. As such, it demonstrates a thought-provoking situation in which the leadership adopted a NRC that had been advocated by another, less powerful actor. At the same time, nationalist politicians, presented many more radical opinions, role conceptions and solutions than the Russian leadership, from the beginning questioning support for Ukraine's sovereignty and openly calling for military intervention. Consequently, although nationalists are generally (with an exception of the period leading to the Five-Day War) considered to have no access to foreign policy decision making processes (see Laruelle, 2019), one cannot disregard their statements and opinions as these politicians were members of the Russian Duma and were present in the Russian media. As such, their ideas and propositions reached public opinion and could, at least to a certain extent, have shaped the public expectations thus putting (limited) pressure on the authorities. Indeed, Putin's rebuttal of Zhirinovsky's criticism of Lavrov and RFP (RIA, 2013) indicates that the leadership pays attention to what these politicians say, at the same time not allowing them to trespass vaguely set boundaries, which points to the usefulness of the concept of managed pluralism (Balzer, 2003) also in the analysis of RFP.

On the one hand, liberal, non-systemic opposition criticised the majority of RFP decisions, contested the main NRC used by the Kremlin (defender of compatriots) and supported role conceptions, such as member of Europe or internal developer. Although there was no visible impact of liberal contestation on RFP behaviour, what liberals said was not meaningless because their anti-interventionist and pro-Western statements on one side, and aggressive, radical propositions of nationalists on the other created a picture of moderate Russian leadership, an image that suits the regime. This again indicates that not only in domestic politics but also in foreign policy there are some mechanisms of managed pluralism by which the authorities allow only those voices that suit their goals. Furthermore, the

analysis implies that as in democracies, also in (semi-)authoritarian regimes some horizontal role contestation processes can be traced, both inside and outside the ruling regime.

Individual level of analysis: informal and narrowing decision-making

The factors described in the sections dealing with international and domestic levels of analysis could have been insufficient for Russia to reassert its NRCs and take such decisive steps towards Ukraine without changes and some turbulence in foreign policy decision-making processes. Indeed, inconsistencies and shifts in dominant NRCs during the Ukraine crisis might have resulted not only from the developments of events in Ukraine but also from some obstacles in decision-making processes. Russian analysts (see Surnacheva et al., 2014) point to lack of coordination and even conflicts between different departments in the first phase of the Ukraine crisis. For instance, Sergei Glazev, the president's adviser on regional economic integration was not in contact either with the government, or his Kremlin colleague Vladislav Surkov or Foreign Ministry (Surnacheva et al., 2014). As such, it indicates that the decision-making process on the crisis was streamlined and more decisive decisions were made only after it was taken over by the president along with a small group of closest advisers (see below).

In addition, further changes in the Russian power circles took place between the Five-Day War and the Euromaidan revolution. In 2011 Aleksei Kudrin left the government after 11 years as finance minister. He was considered (one of) the last influential liberals in the government and one of the last reformers. Kudrin, for example, criticised Medvedev's increase in military spending and his departure increased fears over Russian economy and reform prospects. It was also seen as a blow to the liberal camp that might strengthened siloviki even further (Anishchuk, 2011), especially as Kudrin had been Putin's long-time ally from St Petersburg who had some influence on shaping RFP and whose advice was listened to by the president (see Feifer, 2002; Galeotti and Bowen, 2014).

Furthermore, during Putin's third term foreign policy decision-making processes became even more informal and the President further narrowed his circle of advisers responsible for international politics. According to Russia analysts (Galeotti and Bowen, 2014; Marten, 2015) Putin limited his group of advisers to people who shared his views, mainly his old colleagues from KGB and FSB. Indeed, no one from politicians considered as leaders of the liberal camp during Putin's first and second term (Gref, Illarionov, Kudrin) was member of the government or presidential administration any more. As such, it indicates that the

increased presence of siloviki, who focus on security issues, support restoration of Russia's great power status and perceive the West as a threat, in Putin's close circle of advisers might contribute to the dominance of more assertive NRCs at the expense of pro-cooperative conceptions advocated by more liberal and economy-focused advisers that were dominant during the two colour revolutions. The direction of these changes is well exemplified by Sergei Glazyev's (although not a silovik himself) attitude toward the crisis. The former leader of nationalist Rodina party, who was appointed Putin's adviser in 2012 and was seen most often in Ukraine out of Russian officials, urged the leadership to 'brand the Maidan protesters as "insurgents" and to adopt a tougher stance, calling at the same time for the federalization of Ukraine' (Surnacheva et al., 2014). The analysis demonstrates that such perception of protesters and Ukrainian opposition was not uncommon among Russian decision-makers which might have resulted from a homogenous group of advisers. Thus, such an understanding of the events in Ukraine might have reduced the leadership room for manoeuvre after Yanukovych's removal from power.

Consequently, changes in the power circles led to a situation in which the crucial decision about the annexation of Crimea was taken by a small group of Putin's closest allies (see Myers, 2014). This version was confirmed by Putin himself in an interview that he gave in a Russian documentary film about the return of Crimea to the Russian Federation. In the interview, Putin recalls the night when he talked with the four closest advisers about the situation in Crimea and potential solutions (Crimea Way Back Home, 2015). Putin did not provide names of his aides but various sources (Myers, 2014; Bacon, 2017) claim that this group included Nikolai Patrushev, the secretary of the SCRF, Sergei Ivanov, Chief of Staff of the Presidential Administration, Aleksander Bortnikov, the director of the FSB and most probably Sergei Shoigu, the Defence Minister. As such, apart from Shoigu (whose presence is questioned by some sources), all other participants are former members of KGB. Such a group composition means that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, including Lavrov, was left outside the decision-making process. It also means that from the decision were excluded liberal minded advisers which links to the argument about changes in decision-making processes described above. Furthermore, the decision was not consulted with the Ministry of Finance which was confirmed by the Russia's First Deputy Finance Minister Tatiana Nesterenko who said that the Ministry was not asked about the possible costs of the annexation of Crimea (Nesterenko, 2015).

The omission of so many important ministers and aides who could have advised against the decision to take over Crimea, even for economic reasons, may not only result from the quick opportunist decision as suggested by Forsberg and Pursiainen (2017), but from the deeper changes in the power circles and foreign policy decision-making processes described in the previous chapters. Consequently, in the case of Crimea, such a narrow and homogeneous group of advisers may have led to incomplete information and group-think in decision-making process. The problem of group-think is raised by Bukkvoll (2016, p. 274; see also Kuchins, 2014) who writes that 'the dominance of the FSB may be seen as one of the reasons for the use of force' and notes that within the decision-making group the strongest supporters of actions in Crimea were supposedly Ivanov and Patrushev (both with KGB/FSB past), while defence minister Shoigu was the biggest opponent.

These findings are particularly interesting when confronted with the analysis of statements delivered by Russian leaders. Distribution of NRCs suggested that Lavrov could have, at least to a certain extent, different views on Russia's roles and policies. Consequently, Lavrov might have been excluded from the decision about the annexation as Putin increasingly tended to eliminate conflicting opinions from decision-making processes. This conclusion is difficult to confirm without some insider's knowledge, nevertheless, even if there was no role conflict between Putin and the Russian foreign minister, the above indicates that Lavrov's cautious statements after the breakthrough events in Kyiv resulted not only from general surprise but also from lack of insight due to his exclusion from the decision-making process. To sum up, I argue that increasingly informal foreign policy-making processes, subsequent shifts limiting the influence of liberal advisers and reducing the number of foreign policy decision-makers to former members of the security services were important factors that enabled and facilitated the change in Russia's dominant NRCs and made the decision about the annexation possible.

Conclusions

The emergence of more assertive NRCs resulted from the combination of important changes in the international context and domestic situation compared with the 2008 war in Georgia, and especially the colour revolutions. The fiasco of the reset with the US, Western (especially American) support for the regime change during the Arab Spring as well as mass domestic protests in 2011/12 led to the perception of Russia's roles as a counterweight to the West and its actions in world affairs. Consequently, Russian leaders perceived their state as an

advocate of states' sovereignty and defender of the peace (often against Western actions). The tensions over Ukraine and its AA with the EU as well as the beginning of the Euromaidan protests in this country only strengthened these perceptions of Russia's international responsibilities. At the same time, it is important to note that at the beginning of the crisis decision-makers saw Russia's role rather passively. This perception changed at the turn of February and March, that is during the breakthrough events in Kyiv, following which Russia annexed Crimea.

However, even if the breakthrough events of February 2014 were a precipitating factor for the annexation, one should not forget about the internal context which made this decision possible or even desirable and shifts in foreign policy decision-making processes which were narrowed down to Putin's closest allies, often with similar background, which facilitated changes in dominant NRCs. Such a small and homogenous group of advisers might have distorted the analysis and limited the leadership options from the beginning of the crisis. As such, because of the total lack of relations with moderate Ukrainian opposition, Russia did not have any plan B after Yanukovych's removal from power which resulted in very narrow perception of Russia's international duties and focus on protection of Russian compatriots living in Ukraine, which was used as a justification for the annexation of Crimea. Indeed, the analysis indicates that the decision about the annexation was taken rather opportunistically at the end of February (as confirmed by Putin) which implies that it was not role change that led to a shift in Russia's international behaviour but rather foreign policy decisions resulted in a change in dominant NRCs (or these processes took place simultaneously). As such, rather than driving the policy towards Crimea, the NRC of defender of compatriots was used strategically to gain support for it and to justify the incorporation of the peninsula to the Russian and international public. These findings indicate limitations of liberal accounts that present increasingly authoritarian and nationalist system as a direct cause of more assertive RFP. At the same time, they validate Laruelle's (2015) argument about the post hoc use of nationalist explanations rather than advancing a nationalist agenda by Russia. Further, the importance of domestic causes points to shortcomings of realist approaches, which explain Russia's actions with geopolitical factors (e.g. Mearsheimer, 2014). Last but not least, the strategic use of NRCs, such as defender of compatriots and supporter of Ukrainian people indicates that, contrary to some accounts (e.g. see Wood, 2016), RFP was still largely pragmatic as well as reactive and opportunistic, rather than ideological.

Finally, the analysis demonstrates some contestation processes which should not be disregarded, especially in the case of nationalist opposition. These politicians were first to demonise the Ukrainian opposition and call for protection of Russian compatriots living there and a similar position was later adopted by the Russian leadership, which could have been partly caused by the increasingly negative public opinion about the events in Ukraine. The analysis does not demonstrate any causality, nevertheless, it indicates that nationalist politicians being members of the parliament and having access to the media, could, at least to certain extent, shape public debate and in this way indirectly influence changes in dominant NRCs and RFP. Consequently, efforts to shape public views on the crisis through the state controlled media and more frequent use of the defender of compatriots role conception only after public opinion began to support their protection, and especially after the annexation rather than before it, demonstrates that the regime reckons with the public not only in domestic but also in international matters. This indicates the importance of public consensus and points to managed pluralism in the foreign policy realm which allows authorities to test the popularity of different (but within established boundaries) solutions among the public. In other words, as in domestic politics (Balzer, 2003), the regime encourages some voices on RFP, while at the same time restricts those considered as undesirable. In addition, the analysis indicates that the significance of the public's acquiescence of RFP decisions, and therefore its role in shaping Russia's international behaviour, grows when the authorities feel less confident as was the case in the period leading to the Ukraine crisis. As such, despite confirming President Putin's key role, the analysis shows that processes shaping RFP are much more complex than often presented and that they are not necessarily much different from those in democracies. These findings also have some wider implications as they indicate that even in (semi-) authoritarian states decision-makers are not all-powerful, they are subject to different pressures, take into account other views and pay attention to public opinion. Thus, by demonstrating the increased domestic contestation of NRCs that was reflected in crisis decision-making, role theory points to the importance of domestic politics and internal divisions for understanding of (Russian) foreign policy. More broadly, the role theoretical analysis that includes contestation processes has implications for FPA and IR scholarship. It demonstrates limitations of dominant-variable explanations, both geopolitical and domestic ones, and contributes to our understanding of the domestic politics-foreign policy nexus in non-democratic states.

To conclude, the Euromaidan revolution was the second case when dominant NRCs changed during the crisis. The findings indicate that important foreign policy decisions led to a shift in dominant NRCs which were later used as a justification for Russia's international actions. It confirms the temporary and strategic character of NRCs such as defender of compatriots and supporter of threatened people (South Ossetians, Ukrainians), and once again points to pragmatism in RFP. The analysis also shows a mechanism in which the leadership adopts NRCs that were earlier advocated by other actors, in this case parliamentary opposition, but only after they gained support of public opinion which implies the importance of horizontal and vertical contestation in non-democratic states. The following chapter and conclusions further examine the above processes.

8. Dominant national role conceptions and Russia's divergent reactions to the upheavals in Georgia and Ukraine

The aim of this chapter is to summarise the case study analysis from previous chapters, compare Russian responses to the four crises in the post-Soviet space and examine the main factors that influenced Moscow's decisions in order to identify common themes that determined Russian foreign policy (RFP) behaviour in the analysed period. The first section examines changes in national role conceptions (NRCs) used by Russian decision-makers. The second part describes the differences between the upheavals, but concludes that all of them could have been treated by Russian leaders as a threat. This indicates that other causes were of decisive importance and as such, the following parts focus on three main types of factors that influenced changes in Russia's NRCs and foreign policy behaviour: international, domestic (including vertical and horizontal contestation) and decision-making processes. I argue that changes in external and internal contexts could not have been sufficient to alter RFP behaviour without shifts in Putin's circle of advisers and Russia's different self-perception. As such, the analysis challenges sometimes mentioned misperception that everything in RFP depends on President Putin and in general, a picture of more assertive but reactive and still largely pragmatic foreign policy emerges.

Changes in Russia's national role conceptions

The analysis of statements delivered by Russian leaders during the four crises in the post-Soviet space demonstrates significant changes in the leadership perceptions of Russia's international duties and responsibilities. The most often used NRCs across the four upheavals are shown in Table 17. There are some important trends and shifts in leaders' understanding of Russia's roles which can be observed. Firstly, partner of the West, the most popular NRC during the Rose and the Orange Revolution ceased to be dominant during the Five-Day War and the Euromaidan Revolution. As explained in the following sections of this chapter, this decline is closely related to the termination of perception of Russia's role by its leaders as internal developer and advocate of anti-terrorist initiatives, NRCs that were largely behind the emphasis on partnership with the West which indicates hierarchical relations between these NRCs. In general, since the 2008 Russo-Georgian War, the leaders viewed international duties of their country in much different way, and other NRCs such as defender of Russian

compatriots and supporter of threatened people (South Ossetians and Ukrainians) gained prominence.

Table 18: Dominant NRCs during the four crises (as a % of all coded roles)

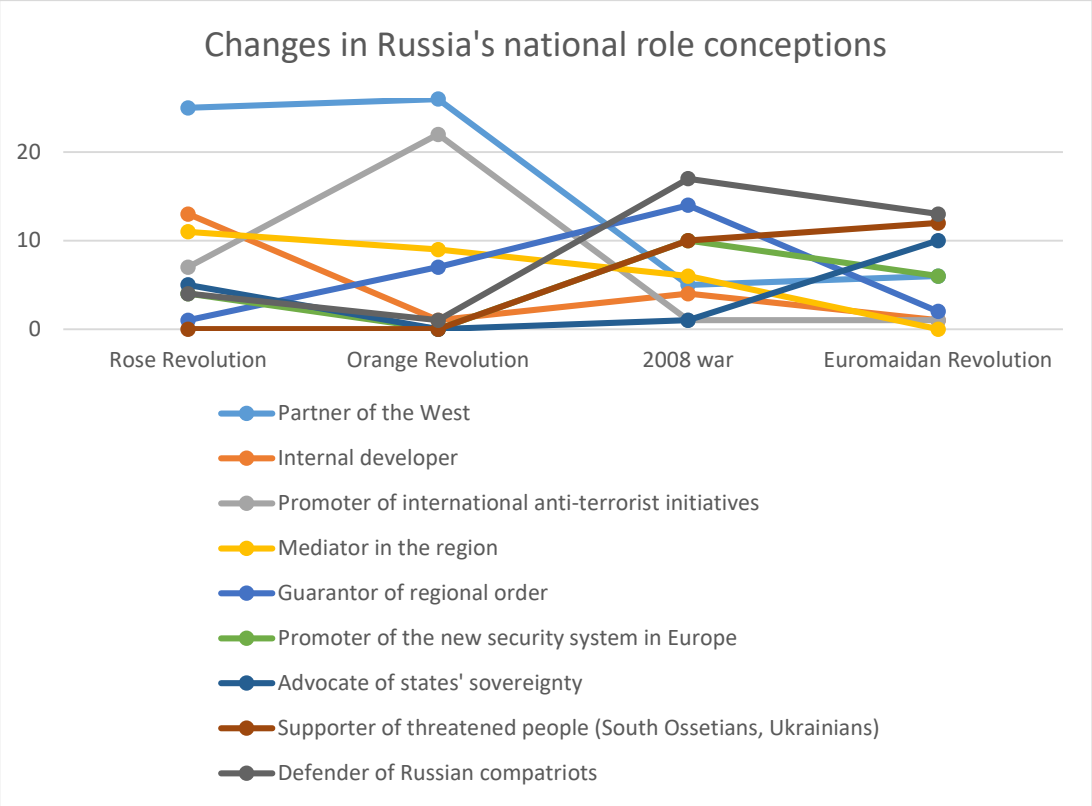
National role conceptions	Rose Revolution	Orange Revolution	Five-Day War	Ukraine crisis
Partner of the West	25	26	5	6
Internal developer	13	1	4	1
Promoter of international anti-terrorist initiatives	7	22	1	1
Regional mediator	11	9	6	0
Guarantor of regional order	1	7	14	2
Advocate of multi-polarity	1	1	7	0
Promoter of the new security system in Europe	4	0	10	6
Advocate of states' sovereignty	5	0	1	10
Supporter of international law	6	1	12	12
Supporter of threatened people (South Ossetians, Ukrainians)	0	0	10	12
Defender of Russian compatriots	4	1	17	13

Source: Russian leaders' statements

Along with the shift in dominant roles, the importance of other NRCs also changed. Russian leaders began to see their country as a guarantor of security in the post-Soviet space rather than a regional mediator, a NRC which was very often employed during the Rose Revolution. Consequently, I argue that this change in understanding of regional roles also contributed to the leadership perception of Russia's duty as a defender of compatriots. Because Russian leaders saw their country as a mediator during the Rose Revolution, they did not support either side during the tensions in Tbilisi but preferred to negotiate a settlement between conflicted parties, which indicates that dominant NRCs influenced policy preferences rather the other way round. Likewise, Russia strongly supported Georgian territorial integrity not only in words but also when it helped to solve the Adjaran crisis. On the other hand, during the crisis in 2008 Russian leaders did not see their country as a mediator but rather as a guarantor of regional order and in consequence, as a defender of Russian minority as well as South Ossetian people. As such, Russia reacted in a completely different way, intervened military in Georgia and recognised the independence of South Ossetia and Abkhazia. Consequently, Russian leaders did not perceive their state's role as a mediator also during the Euromaidan revolution and in this case Moscow's reaction was similarly decisive: the annexation of Crimea and support for separatists in Eastern Ukraine.

Furthermore, when Russian decision-makers ceased to see their country as partner of the West, they began to advocate a multi-polar world order as well as creation of the new European security architecture. In addition to their disappointment with the security system in Europe, the leaders increasingly often spoke about their concerns related to other states' non-compliance with international law (for instance giving as an example the recognition of Kosovo's independence by the West) and as such, presented their country as a strong supporter of it. Finally, during the last upheaval, the growing dissatisfaction with the international situation was manifested in the more frequent presentation of Russia as an advocate of states' sovereignty. Changes in the percentage distribution of the most important NRCs are presented in figure 1.

Figure 1: Changes in Russia's dominant NRCs



Source: Russian leaders' statements

In general, the analysis indicates that it was NRCs that influenced RFP behaviour not the other way round (see more in the next chapter), with the important exception of NRCs of defender of compatriots and supporter of threatened people which, as argued in the previous chapters, were strategically employed by the leadership to justify Russia's actions. Indeed, analysing changes in the distribution of the most popular NRCs, it is important to note that the defender of compatriots role conception became dominant in the second half

of the two latter upheavals. In other words, this NRC was clearly linked to the conflict over South Ossetia in 2008 and the 2014 Ukraine crisis (the same applies to the NRC of supporter of threatened people). As such, in order to get the full picture and understand how the perception of Russia's duties by their leaders changed, it is important to look at NRCs which were dominant before the tensions in both crises increased. During the Five-Day War Russian decision-makers perceived their country's role as an advocate of the new European security architecture while during the Euromaidan revolution as a supporter of states' (including Ukraine's) sovereignty. This indicates some fundamental changes in the understanding of Russia's international duties and responsibilities. From the emphasis on partnership with the West, Russian leaders shifted toward roles which stressed their dissatisfaction with the world affairs, mainly resulting from Western actions. As for the most popular NRCs (just behind the dominant one - partner of the West) during the first two upheavals, it is worth noting that internal developer was definitely most often used during the Rose Revolution but despite generally similar structural conditions, already during the Orange Revolution the emphasis switched from internal development to fight against terrorism. This shift mainly resulted from the Beslan terrorist attack in September 2004 in which more than 300 people died, including almost 200 children.

Finally, it is important to mention that apart from changes in the distribution of NRCs, the meaning of some of them also changed with time. The best example of such adaptation is the defender of compatriots role conception which before becoming dominant in 2008, had been also used by Russian leaders during the colour revolutions. Nevertheless, during the first two crises, rather than speaking about the necessity to defend Russians living abroad, decision-makers from the Kremlin talked about problems these people faced and peaceful methods of protecting their interests. To sum up, scholars write that changes that took place in RFP at that time resulted from increasing domestic authoritarianism (see Dale and Cohen, 2010; Shevtsova, 2010) or from Western encroachment on Russia's sphere of interests (e.g. see Mearsheimer, 2014). Nevertheless, this research shows a much more complex picture and indicates that it was combination of these and other important factors that resulted in the shifts in the leadership perceptions of Russia's international duties and their understanding of different NRCs that had significant implications for RFP behaviour. The sources of these changes can be divided into three main categories that are thoroughly analysed in the following sections. However, before moving on to this analysis, the differences between the studied upheavals will first be examined.

(In)significant differences between the upheavals and their consequences

The examination of statements delivered by Russian decision-makers shows that they did not consider the two colour revolutions to be as serious crises as those in 2008 and 2014. In particular, the Rose Revolution was not treated in such a way, as evidenced by the low number of leaders' references to the situation in Georgia during this crisis. These findings provide a different interpretation that contrasts with some of the explanations in the literature which speak about Russia's view of these events as coup d'état (e.g. see Delcour and Wolczuk, 2015).

Consequently, I argue that the leadership diverging perceptions of upheavals resulted mainly from different understanding of Russia's duties and responsibilities in the international arena, for example, from the focus on internal development rather than foreign policy and regional issues in 2003-04. Another factor that could have contributed to these perceptions was the nature of the upheavals and the less obvious role of the West during the colour revolutions than on the eve of the Five-Day War, when the Georgian army that later killed Russian peacekeepers was trained by US forces. Indeed, the analysis of leaders' statements points to the death of Russian peacekeepers as one of the factors that influenced Russia's reaction or at least provided Moscow with justification for the intervention. Likewise, Russian decision-makers changed their positions towards the 2008 and 2014 upheavals when their compatriots or nationals close to them (South Ossetians, Ukrainians) were threatened, and justified their actions by the need to protect them.

Nevertheless, a closer analysis of the colour revolutions, and especially of the Adjara crisis during the Rose Revolution indicates that also in 2004 Russian leaders could have easily found a justification for recognition of the breakaway republics and intervention, for instance, as a response to appeals from the Adjaran leader, Abashidze. Russia could have also taken advantage of Georgian opposition seizing the parliament and threats of storming the presidential residence and justify intervention with restoring order and protecting minorities living in autonomous regions. As such, Russia could have interpreted and presented each of these events as a threat to its compatriots, its interests, and local people and react in a more decisive way but it did not due to different understanding of its international duties and responsibilities.

That said, opposition leaders and their attitudes toward Russia are one more factor which distinguishes the two colour revolutions from the subsequent upheavals. During both the Rose and Orange Revolutions opposition leaders were known to the Kremlin as they had

already served in the regimes of Shevardnadze and Kuchma respectively. In addition, both Saakashvili in 2003/04 as well as Yushchenko and Tymoshenko in 2004/05 demonstrated very pragmatic attitudes and spoke about cooperation with Russia. In both cases, Putin reciprocated this attitude, by saying that he was ready to work with the new authorities. On the contrary, statements delivered by Saakashvili during the 2008 war and by leaders of the Euromaidan revolution were not favourable to Russia and accused Moscow of causing both crises. Furthermore, the leaders of the Euromaidan were relatively unknown and it was not entirely clear what to expect from them, especially since they were not only pro-Western but also openly anti-Russian. In addition, for the first time there was a situation where a nationalist, anti-Russian party – Svoboda - could co-rule Ukraine and the statements of Russian leaders confirm that, contrary to the Orange Revolution, the perception of the Ukrainian opposition was very negative and it worsened even further after the removal of Yanukovych from power. Indeed, the ousting of the Ukrainian president is one of the most important differences between the upheavals which influenced changes in dominant NRCs and could have influenced the Kremlin's reaction. The analysis of Russian leaders' statements demonstrates the shift in NRCs and elevation of defender of compatriots role exactly at the turn of February and March 2014, that is just after the breakthrough events in Kyiv. These findings speak to arguments about clientelistic elites in Russia (e.g. see Baturo and Elkink, 2016). The pragmatism demonstrated by the leaders of the colour revolutions was reassuring for the business elites in Russia, and indeed, some of them supported Yushchenko's candidacy. On the other hand, the radicalism presented by the leaders in the two subsequent crises did not herald anything positive for the Kremlin and Russian business elites (who generally do not like extremists) because on the other side there was nobody moderate to speak to and do business with and, as a consequence, there was not much to lose in case of more assertive reactions. Moreover, in such a situation, part of the elite could try to secure their interests in a different way, as in the case of private financial interests of various clans and groups and their support for the intervention in South Ossetia (see Kimmage, 2008).

Finally, it is not without significance that the upheavals in 2008 and 2014 took place after the colour revolutions. The statements of Russian leaders imply that they were surprised by the Rose Revolution in Georgia. As such, one could argue that the Kremlin was not prepared for this event and that appropriate mechanisms were not in place for the Orange Revolution which took place just one year later. On the contrary, in 2008 and 2014 Russia had already experienced three revolutions in the post-Soviet space and was ready for

different scenarios. Furthermore, after the initial declarations of cooperation with Russia, the new leadership of both Ukraine and Georgia took a decisively pro-Western course, which worsened Russia's relations not only with these countries but also with the United States, which became the main supporter of their pro-Western transformation. These factors were not insignificant for the leadership understanding of Russia's NRCs and their perceptions of the future upheavals in the post-Soviet space. Indeed, Russian analysts emphasise that the Kremlin became hostage of its own propaganda about the 'orange threat' or 'orange contagion' which limited its room for manoeuvre during the 2014 crisis (see Surnacheva et al., 2014). In addition, after several statements by Yushchenko (Larrabee, 2010; Biersack and O'Lear, 2014, p. 256) who had called into question the presence of the Russian Black Sea Fleet in Sevastopol, during the Euromaidan revolution the Russian leadership knew that in case of another pro-Western government in Ukraine, the risk of losing its only warm water port was real. As such, being aware of the consequences of the pro-Western governments in Georgia and Ukraine, the 2008 and 2014 upheavals created an opportunity for Russia to hinder Tbilisi's and Kyiv's rapprochement with the West and in particular with NATO.

Consequently, the analysis shows that the Five-Day War had no less an effect on understanding of Russia's NRCs and in consequence, RFP behaviour than the colour revolutions. Statements delivered by the Russian leadership (e.g. see Medvedev, 2008) suggest that Georgian intervention in South Ossetia had a fundamental significance for them and their views on the European security system. Even more importantly, Russian leaders were completely surprised with the West's almost unilateral support for Saakashvili, while they, referring to the threat to citizens, spoke about 'the Russian 9/11' (Medvedev, 2008i). Their speeches imply that these divergent perceptions and total disappointment with Western reaction was a ground-breaking event that might have destroyed the rest of their confidence in the West. These shifts are reflected in the distribution of NRCs. In 2008, especially before the war in South Ossetia, Russian leaders did not see their country as a partner of the West but still spoke about the need to cooperate in creating the new security architecture in Europe. However, in 2013/14 the leaders mainly understood Russia's role as a counterweight to Western actions (for example, support for regime change during the Arab Spring) and as a result used NRCs, such as of advocate of states' sovereignty, defender of the peace and supporter of international law.

To sum up, differences in the character of the upheavals as well as in the internal situation in Ukraine and Georgia can be considered as additional factors that contributed to

the dominance of different NRCs and Russia's divergent reactions. Nevertheless, as discussed above, despite these differences, Russia could have interpreted and presented each of these events as a threat to its interests and compatriots living in Ukraine and Georgia and, as a result, decide on more aggressive reactions. As such, the fact that the perception of and reaction to the two colour revolutions was completely different from that in 2008 and 2014 implies that there were other factors which were of crucial importance.

International level of analysis

Significant changes in the international situation which had an impact on RFP took place over the analysed decade, including relative decline of the US global dominance and rising position of BRICS countries. Furthermore, it is worth noting that at the beginning of the examined period rapprochement between Russia and the West that followed the 9/11 attacks still continued. Despite important disagreements, such as the war in Iraq, Russia still placed considerable confidence in the US and perceived its relationship with Washington as 'the common responsibility for the maintenance of stability in the world' (Ivanov, 2003i). In addition, Moscow continued to work on rapprochement with the European Union, especially in the economic sphere and trade. Equally important is the fact that at that time, the pro-cooperative attitude was reciprocated by the West. This external context (along with the emphasis on internal development further described in the following pages) was conducive to the perception of Russia's role as partner of the West.

Consequently, the Rose Revolution did not have a major impact on Russia's relations with Western states. After the crisis in Georgia, Moscow continued to show willingness to work with the West and Russian decision-makers even spoke about the need to broaden cooperation with NATO. The emphasis on partnership with the West continued throughout the Orange Revolution in Ukraine and the distribution of NRCs as well as the Kremlin's decisions indicate that at that time Russia was more afraid of deteriorating relations with Western partners than of losing influence in the post-Soviet area. During the crisis in Ukraine, this emphasis on cooperation with Western partners not only stemmed from plans of internal development, Russia's dependence on economic cooperation with the West and Moscow's willingness to join various international organisations but above all, from the need to cooperate in the fight against terrorism.

Nevertheless, it is important to note that Moscow's cooperative attitude toward the West was not as uncritical and romanticised as shortly after the collapse of the Soviet Union,

but it was rather based on pragmatic considerations described above. In other words, it was a kind of 'pragmatic, autonomous cooperation' - Moscow wanted to work with the West but also was ready to disagree when something was against its national interests as in case of the Iraq War or support for different side during the Orange Revolution. Nonetheless, these disagreements, as emphasised several times by Russian leaders, should not have influenced strategic partnership between Russia and Western states. As such, the Russian leadership views on relations with its main significant other, and consequently, on international situation during the Rose and the Orange Revolution were much different than in 2008 and especially in 2013/14. In 2003-05 Russia's confidence in the West was weakened by the intervention in Iraq and support for the colour revolutions, but at that time the negative consequences of these events were not yet fully known.

However, when more and more serious disagreements began to grow, the cooperation with the West ceased to be crucial for Russia's internal modernisation (about which Russian leaders spoke less and less often anyway) and domestic terrorist threats diminished, the emphasis on partnership with Western states began to fade. Among the most important disagreements were US missile defence plans, the Kosovo issue and the Western, especially US policy of democracy promotion, which was perceived by Russia as hypocritical as at the same time Washington continued to build up its military might (see Lipman, 2017). Against the background of these growing misunderstandings, statements of Russian leaders indicate that the factor which was especially damaging for Russia's relations with the West were NATO's enlargement plans to Ukraine and Georgia, in particular the NATO Bucharest summit, at which it was announced that these countries would one day become members of the alliance. As such, this research validates some of the realist arguments (Friedman, 2008; Mearsheimer, 2014a) about the influence of Western actions on RFP.

The above issues showed Russia that Western partners did not take its interests into account. In other words, the lack of consultations with Moscow demonstrated to Russian leaders the impossibility of equal partnership with the West, which, in their perception, required from Russia submission to Western plans and wishes. As such, along with these successive disagreements, Russian leaders realised that benefits of cooperation with the West were not as big as expected. The relative weakening of the West's standing in the world and the internal strengthening of Russia as well as the leadership perception of Russia as an increasingly strong player with a growing international position (see pages below) also contributed to this conclusion. Furthermore, these disagreements proved to Russian leaders

that the West still treated Moscow as a potential threat and behaved towards it as it had done in the 90s when it had used Russia's weaknesses to push for its interests.

The factors described above led to the reassessment of Russia's international roles and a slow turning away from the emphasis on cooperation with the West. Instead, Russian leaders began to advocate the creation of a new security system in Europe, explaining that the contemporary one was no longer able to guarantee security on the continent, which, in their opinion, was confirmed by the Five-Day War. In these circumstances, Russian decision-makers also began to see their country as a guarantor of order in the post-Soviet space. However, it does not mean that Moscow aimed for confrontation with the West, President Putin rather tried to integrate Russia 'into the system of Great Powers on equal terms' (Lukyanov, 2008, p. 21). Nevertheless, in this context, the war in Georgia, completely different perceptions of this crisis and disappointment with the role of the West (Russian leaders even suggested that the Georgian attack on South Ossetia would not have been possible without US consent) buried the remnants of mutual trust in the Russian-Western partnership. Furthermore, these relations weakened even further as a result of important internal factors (more in the section below) as well as external ones, such as the Arab Spring which Putin portrayed as 'a whole series of controlled "colour revolutions"' leading to 'chaos, outbreaks of violence and a series of upheavals' (Allison, 2014, p. 1289). In consequence, Russian leaders increasingly often saw their state's role as a defender of the peace, supporter of international law and advocate of states' sovereignty. Against this background, the Euromaidan revolution, which was perceived in the Kremlin as Western interference in Ukraine's internal affairs and meddling in the Russian sphere of influence, was another proof for Russian leaders that mutual partnership was no longer feasible and as a result, the risk of worsening relations with the West was not as problematic as during the Rose and Orange Revolutions. These factors made it easier for the leadership to adopt more unilateral NRCs aimed at protection of people living in Ukraine, which at the same time allowed Moscow to secure its interests (especially the Black Sea Fleet in Crimea) and reduce, or even block the possibility of Ukraine joining NATO.

Overall, during the colour revolutions, the international as well as the regional context were much different and more favourable than in 2008 and 2013/2014. As such, the analysis confirms arguments about the importance of Western actions for RFP raised by different authors (e.g. see Shleifer and Treisman, 2011; Roberts, 2018) and adds some evidence and depth to them. Indeed, it shows that the US missile defence plans, the Arab Spring, and NATO

and the EU enlargement plans influenced the perception of Russia's international responsibilities, and consequently, foreign policy behaviour which points to reactive character of RFP and indicates some strengths of realist explanations. Nevertheless, the following sections showing the importance of internal factors for the reassessment of Russia's NRCs also highlight their considerable limitations.

Domestic level of analysis

Apart from the changing international context, there were also significant shifts in Russia's internal situation which had an impact on Moscow's foreign policy. The section below discusses factors, such as economic growth, threat of terrorism, weakening of the regime's legitimacy and leaders' perception of Russia as an increasingly important international player, in order to explain their influence on changes in dominant NRCs and in consequence, RFP behaviour.

Internal development, problems with terrorism and rising material capabilities

During Putin's first presidential term, the new Russian leadership, especially the president and his liberal advisers, were mindful of the country's poor economic situation and the need for reforms that could help Russia catch up with more developed countries. As a result, during the first two analysed crises, especially the Rose Revolution, Putin spoke about the necessity of modernising the economy and social sphere in order to accelerate Russia's internal development. The Russian President, who while in the St Petersburg Mayor's office had served as head of the Committee for External Relations, and his advisers (many of whom he had worked with in St Petersburg) were aware that Russia's internal progress was not possible without foreign investments and the state's integration into the Western-led international institutions. Putin (1999) himself acknowledged that Russia's recovery 'would be long and painful without foreign capital. But we have no time for this. Consequently, we must do our best to attract foreign capital to the country'. He also argued for the growing importance of economic diplomacy within the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs because, as he claimed, the ministry's central staff did not 'have a full grasp of the trade and economic issues' (Putin, 2001). Furthermore, the Russian President repeatedly stressed that the main objective of RFP was to ensure favourable external conditions for Russia's development. As such, I argue that this strong accent on economic dimension and domestic progress was one of the main (if not the main) factors behind Russia's emphasis on partnership with the West.

This in turn contributed to the perception of the revolutions in Georgia and Ukraine and to the lack of aggressive reactions to these upheavals.

During the Rose Revolution the internal developer was the second most often used NRC by Russian leaders. Although still often employed at the beginning of 2004, during the Orange Revolution the popularity of this NRC diminished mainly due to the Russian authorities' emphasis on the fight against terrorism (the second most important NRC in this period). As such, despite less frequent emphasis on the necessity of internal development, the need to fight terrorism was another domestic factor that required cooperation and good relations with the West and indeed, during the Orange Revolution, the partner of the West was still the most often used NRC by Russian top decision-makers.

Despite the relatively small number of successful economic and social reforms and the decreasing emphasis on the necessity of internal development, Russia managed to achieve unprecedentedly high economic growth between 2000 and 2007. This success, which was largely the result of rising oil prices, allowed Russia to stabilise its internal situation (including reducing the threat of terrorism), carry out reforms in the army and, above all, slowly reduce its dependence on Western creditors and investments. As a result, on the eve of the war with Georgia, cooperation with the West was no longer as important to the Kremlin as it had been during the colour revolutions. These changing internal conditions are reflected in the distribution of NRCs. During the Five-Day War, neither partner of the West, nor internal developer, nor advocate of anti-terrorist initiatives were among the dominant NRCs. Instead, Russian leaders saw their state as a supporter of the new European security architecture and as a guarantor of regional stability. Consequently, the leadership did not speak about mediation in the Ossetian crisis but rather about the duty to protect Russian compatriots and South Ossetian population. Nevertheless, the improvement of the economic situation and reduction of terrorist threats were not the only internal factors that led to the rise of more assertive NRCs.

The ‘orange threat’, weakening legitimacy and the conservative turn

Although after the colour revolutions President Putin faced criticism in Russia for an inadequate response (see Bremmer, 2005, p. 4), these upheavals did not cause rapid changes in RFP. In the aftermath of the Orange Revolution, the Russian leadership was mostly concerned with internal implications of events in the post-Soviet states rather than external ones (see Herd, 2005; Petrov and Ryabov, 2006; Wilson, 2010). In other words, the Kremlin was afraid that a repetition of a similar scenario might take place in Russia during the 2008

transition of power. According to Zygar (2016, p. 66), the emulation of the Ukrainian scenario in Russia was Putin's main fear out of which, for example, the Kremlin did not allow a former Prime Minister Kasyanov to take part in the 2008 presidential elections. As such, a long-term insulation against 'the Orange contagion' began (see March, 2014) which meant anti-democratic reforms and the rise of authoritarian rule in Russia (which were also a consequence of the attack in Beslan). For instance, Russian leaders started to endorse the concept of sovereign democracy, while at the end of 2003 Putin still had claimed that democratic values in Russia should be identical to those in the West and 'Russia should in no way claim any exclusivity' in this area (Putin, 2003a). This threat perception among the Russian leadership was only intensified with President Bush's initiative of democracy promotion. Consequently, newly pro-Western Georgia and Ukraine became the main significant others for the Russian leadership (along with the United States). In this context, the rallying round the flag effect against these 'enemies' was created during the upheavals in 2008 and 2014 and in both cases Georgia and Ukraine respectively, were presented in such a way that intervention became almost a natural solution. As such, the Russian domestic context was completely different compared with the Rose and Orange Revolutions when there was no 'threat' narrative and Russia was focused on internal development and cooperation with the West, which was reflected in the distribution of NRCs.

Furthermore, the 2011/12 protests in Russia which were largely aimed at United Russia party and Putin himself further weakened the regime's legitimacy that had already been enfeebled due to growing economic problems, which were a consequence of the 2009 recession, after which economic growth did not return to the level from the beginning of Putin's presidency. This factor is especially important compared to the period of the colour revolutions, when Russia was quickly recovering and the economic situation was improving daily. In addition, in 2003-05 the chaos of the 1990s and the economic disasters of 1998 were still alive in people's memories in contrast to 2008, and especially 2013/14 when these memories were much weaker. Consequently, in 2013 Putin's approval rating fell to the lowest level since 2000 (Arkhipov, 2013). The awareness of the weakened position can be noticed in Russian leaders' more cautious statements. In 2003-04 Putin was not afraid of speaking about corruption, bribery and the difficult socio-economic situation in Russia which indicates that the authorities felt confident of huge public support. However, it is hard to find similar statements in 2013 or 2014, that is in the period of economic stagnation in Russia

when after almost fifteen years in power, it was difficult to burden predecessors with these problems.

The weakening, mainly among the middle class, support led to the 'conservative turn' (see chapter 7) which in foreign policy manifested itself in more emphasis on Russia's distinctiveness from the West that resulted in the increased use of NRCs such as advocate of states' sovereignty and defender of the peace which were often invoked to present the contrast between the attitude and actions of Russia and the West. In addition, strengthened nationalist rhetoric was reflected in the emphasis on protection of Russian compatriots and brotherly Ukrainian people (dominant NRCs during the Euromaidan revolution). As such, 'the conservative turn' created a broader context in which more assertive NRCs could come to be dominant and aggressive reaction towards the crisis in Ukraine became a natural solution (as in 2008 in Georgia) that was expected by public opinion and led to a surge in the president's support. All in all, the analysis validates arguments about the significance of domestic situation for RFP behaviour (e.g. see Allison, 2014; Shevtsova, 2014) and showing how they influenced Russia's perceptions of its international duties adds some nuance to these interpretations. However, this research argues that the above factors would not have been sufficient for Russia to adopt more assertive NRCs without important ideational sources described in the following section.

Russia's changing self-perception and sense of injustice

Indeed, the analysis indicates that increasingly widespread perception of Russia by its leaders as a stronger and more important player in the international arena strongly contributed to change in the dominant NRCs and, consequently, RFP behaviour. Although some scholars claim that 'the Russian elite's conception of itself and its place in the world looks much the same as in the mid-1990s' (Mankoff, 2009, p. 5), the analysis demonstrates that this perception changed, in particular between 2004/05 and 2008, that is in the period when Russia significantly strengthened internally, especially in the economic sphere. The comparison of statements delivered by the decision-makers during the two colour revolutions and the Russo-Georgian War demonstrates that in 2008 Russian leaders much more often spoke about their country as an increasingly strong and important international actor which influenced changes in perceptions of Russia's international duties.

As Russia became stronger internally, it did not have to put so much emphasis on cooperation with Western countries which can be noticed, for example, in different statements about NATO, in which Russian leaders pointed out that it was NATO who needed

Russia, not the other way round. As such, Russian decision-makers were more willing to promote Moscow's plans internationally and oppose the West, especially when its actions threatened to adversely affect Russia's national interests. In addition to the diminishing importance of partnership with the West and international cooperation, the perception of Russia as a stronger actor influenced more frequent use of NRCs such as supporter of the new European security architecture or advocate of multi-polar world order, in which the new, stronger Russia was supposed to be one of the main players. Consequently, this change in the perception of international standing and responsibilities influenced Russia's reactions to the analysed upheavals. In 2003-4 Russia was still recovering after trauma and very difficult economic situation of the 1990s, thus its leaders did not feel confident enough and knew that the state's international position was not strong enough to react more assertively to the colour revolutions. However, in 2008 when self-perception of Russia's strength and international position was much different, the Kremlin was not afraid of a more aggressive response to the crisis in South Ossetia (likewise in 2014 in Ukraine).

Furthermore, it is important to note that Western actions, such as support for the regime change in the post-Soviet space, recognition of Kosovo's independence despite Russia's opposition and US plans of anti-missile defence system, gradually built up sense of injustice, neglect of Russia's interest and even betrayal among Russian elites. These feelings were only strengthened during future upheavals. Firstly, when the Georgian army, which had been trained by American soldiers, killed Russian peacekeepers and the West, to Russia's huge surprise, supported Saakashvili. And again, when the Ukrainian opposition backed by the West broke, the day after its signing, an agreement with Yanukovych, to which the Ukrainian president was urged by Putin himself (Zygar, 2016a, p. 267). To conclude, altered self-perception of Russia and Western actions, which not only did not take this change into account, but on the contrary, led to a growing sense of injustice and even betrayal among Russian leaders, contributed to important shifts in the leadership understanding of Russia's international responsibilities and despite some contestation processes (see below), to changes in RFP behaviour. The issue of self-perception and its impact on Russia's international activity points to the role of national identity and, thus to the importance of some constructivist accounts that consider changing identity as the main factor behind shifts in RFP (Clunan, 2009; Tsygankov, 2016). It also points to relations between roles and identities, which will be raised in the concluding chapter.

Public opinion and vertical role contestation

Comparing views of the public during the two colour revolutions and the two subsequent upheavals, one can observe some significant differences. First, during both the Rose and the Orange Revolution, Russian public opinion was very positive about cooperation with the West (contrary to the Five-Day War and the Euromaidan crisis) which suggests that Russians largely supported the NRC of Western partner that was dominant at that time. It also implies that the public support was one of the factors which contributed to such a strong emphasis on partnership with the West. Second, the public's attitude toward Georgia and Ukraine as well as opposition forces in both countries during the two colour revolutions was more positive than opinions about President Saakashvili in 2008 and leaders of the Euromaidan in 2013/14. In addition, at that time Russians were generally against any interventionist roles and interference in the internal affairs of their neighbours. On the contrary, they preferred their state to act as a mediator and to establish good relations with the new leaderships of Georgia and Ukraine. As such, during the first two upheavals, there were no visible signs of vertical contestation. Nevertheless, the analysis indicates that public preferences could have contributed to the lack of aggressive reactions in both cases as any radical actions taken by the Kremlin toward Georgia and Ukraine against public expectations might have been risky from domestic perspective, in particular before the December 2003 parliamentary elections.

Public opinion was different during the Five-Day War and the Euromaidan revolution. Firstly, the public views of Georgia and its President as well as Ukrainian opposition were very negative. As such, during the 2008 conflict, the public identified with the South Ossetians and supported their independence. Likewise, more than 50% of Russians believed that their compatriots living in Crimea and Donbas were threatened by Ukrainian nationalists. As a result, in both cases Russians were in favour of interventionist positions and supported the NRC of defender of compatriots. At the same time, during these two upheavals the most popular role among public opinion was that of mediator. The analysis demonstrates that Russian authorities generally do not act against public expectations and as such, the popularity of this NRC could have prevented the Kremlin from further actions like seizure of Tbilisi to remove the hated Saakashvili from power or open intervention in Donbass in 2014. Nevertheless, the public generally shared the leadership understanding of the crises and Russia's role in them which largely gave the regime a free hand and facilitated decisions to intervene, recognise the independence of South Ossetia and Abkhazia, and annex Crimea. The annexation of the peninsula was supported by an unprecedented majority of 85-90% of

Russians and no significant contestation of this decision was observed but as explained in the case analysis, this issue should be treated separately because Crimea has special meaning for Russians and for many years they considered its belonging to Ukraine as a historical injustice.

Finally, it is important to note that during the Rose Revolution (and largely during the Orange one) President Putin had huge public support and generally Russians supported his foreign policy so the regime was not in need of seeking new legitimacy and international solutions that could improve its ratings. On the other hand, in 2013, the Russian President had the lowest support since taking office. It would be a simplification to say that Putin decided to annex Crimea in order to improve his support and the analysis has not found any evidence for this. Nevertheless, being aware of public moods, the Kremlin must have known that the annexation would be very well received by the vast majority of society, while the lack of a similar decision, given the already aroused nationalist sentiment, could further lower the president's ratings. As such, it demonstrates that public opinion may not be the key factor in shaping RFP, but in the absence of support it can limit the room for manoeuvre of authorities, while in case of strong support it can work as a contributing factor.

All in all, this research shows that in the four analysed upheavals, the authorities did not act against the expectations of public opinion. Russian decision-makers being aware of public moods, generally pursued a foreign policy that was in line with public preferences, unless these expectations were not explicit or were contradictory. Consequently, it indicates that when there is no clear majority among Russian society or when decisions are not important from its perspective, public opinion does not play any major role in formulating international agenda. But it also implies that in cases where a big majority emerges, the Kremlin may be unwilling to act against these expectations. Furthermore, the fact that Russian leaders often employed the NRC of defender of compatriots both before and after the annexation of Crimea validates arguments which say that the leadership pays attention to public opinion and makes efforts to shape it (Bacon, 2017, p. 66; March, 2018, p. 89). Consequently, it demonstrates the importance of consensus and points to the dialectical mechanism and mutual reinforcements between the regime and the public which indicates that the mechanisms of 'managed pluralism' (Balzer, 2003) also apply to international realm (see more in the concluding chapter). In addition, it points to the importance of consensus not only in democracies but also in (semi-) authoritarian regimes.

Horizontal role contestation

As in case of vertical ones, contestation processes among Russian elites during the four analysed upheavals were characterised by different dynamics. While in the course of the two colour revolutions there was stronger intra-Kremlin contestation, during the Five-Day War and the Euromaidan revolution, it was rather opposition (both liberal and nationalist) which questioned Russian NRCs and actions taken by the leadership. During the two colour revolutions, especially the Rose one, pro-Western moods among Russian elites were much stronger than in 2008 and 2014. Likewise, the colour revolutions themselves were not perceived by them as negatively as the upheavals in 2008 and 2013-14. Furthermore, despite some disagreements with the US (especially the war in Iraq), a large part of the Russian elite was still in favour of cooperation with the West, realising that it was necessary for Russia's economic and security interests. As such, the NRC of Western partner was rather uncontested at that time. The exception were Russian radical nationalists like Zhirinovsky, but even their position was relatively moderate and they did not advocate as interventionist roles as in 2008 and 2013/14, when they supported the division of Georgia and Ukraine. As for Russian liberals, despite some differences in their camp, they strongly supported the NRCs of Western partner and internal developer, were largely in favour of the changes taking place in Georgia and Ukraine, and the Kremlin's pro-cooperative attitude toward Tbilisi and toward Kyiv at the end of the Orange Revolution.

In spite of the general consensus on a pro-Western course, contestation processes were observed within the Kremlin. Indeed, throughout the Rose Revolution, there were two opposing approaches among power circles: a pro-cooperative one which advocated Russia's mediator role, and a more interventionist one, whose supporters demanded a more aggressive response to the situation in Georgia. As for the Orange Revolution, the inconsistency of the Russian position and different messages coming from important players also resulted from divisions within and around the Kremlin and different understanding of Russia’s roles. However, various changes within the regime and especially among Putin's closest advisers (see the following section) led to less diversity of opinion within the Kremlin during the two subsequent crises.

At the same time, contestation processes increased among the Russian opposition. In the period between the colour revolutions and the 2008 war, some significant changes took place on the Russian political scene, which weakened the position of liberals and strengthened the Eurasianist-nationalist camp. Indeed, in addition to the waning position of

the liberals inside the Kremlin (see the following section), also the liberal opposition was weakened, especially since their defeat in the December 2003 elections. The results of these parliamentary elections were a disaster for Russian liberal parties because for the first time since the collapse of the Soviet Union, none of them got seats in the Russian Duma. As a result, the voice of the liberals began to be less heard and their support continued to decrease. Consequently, the Kremlin was less concerned about the liberal opposition, which resulted in more frequent positioning in relation to nationalist opposition, rather than weakened liberals.

Despite the diminished position of liberals, their criticism of Russia's international course increased when dominant NRCs changed and RFP became more assertive. Liberals continued to support NRCs focused on internal development and partnership with the West and spoke about Russia's responsibility to act as a regional mediator. Nevertheless, their critique of the authorities' actions during the Five-Day War and the Euromaidan revolution was hardly audible and had no effect on the change of dominant NRCs and RFP behaviour. At the same time, Russia's reactions to the 2008 and 2014 upheavals were also criticised by increasingly strong Russian nationalists who argued that they were insufficient. Nationalists perceived these events as US anti-Russian operations and presented them, as well as the Georgian leadership and the Ukrainian opposition, in such a way that interventions became more natural or even expected. In addition, in 2008, nationalist concerns and appeals partly resulted from their antipathy to the new president, Medvedev, whom they perceived as weak and unable to defend Russian national interests. During the Five-Day War and the Euromaidan revolution, Russian nationalists advocated more interventionist roles and argued for incorporation of South Ossetia and Abkhazia as well as the Donbass region and division of Ukraine. They were also first to advocate NRCs which spoke about the protection of Russian compatriots as well as South Ossetian and Ukrainian population which might have contributed to the dominance of these roles, especially after they gained the public support. Finally, it is important to point out that the increased contestation from both sides was not necessarily inconvenient for the authorities, because it presented them as a moderate force between two radical camps. Consequently, it again points to some mechanisms of managed pluralism in the area of foreign policy, which will be discussed in the concluding chapter.

Overall, during the last two upheavals the majority of Russian elites were definitely less pro-Western and supported NRCs that advocated stronger engagement in the post-Soviet space. Furthermore, it is important to note that in the second phase of both crises, the

Kremlin's position got closer to the nationalist one which indicates the importance of nationalist voices and their contestation of NRCs and RFP behaviour in (these) crisis periods.

Individual level of analysis and decision-making processes

Finally, this research argues that shifts in the dominant NRCs and RFP would not have been possible without significant changes among Putin's advisers and foreign policy decision-making processes. The section below analyses the influence of these changes on Russia's evolving international behaviour. Changing power dynamics between advisers from different groups are important because as Russia analysts argue 'disputes between Kremlin factions, rather than directives from the president, often determine major policy outcomes' (Bremmer and Charap, 2007, p. 84).

Putin's (new) circle of advisers

At the beginning of his presidency Putin was surrounded by a larger and more diverse group of advisers. However, over time, this group diminished. In particular, many liberal advisers who had been extensively represented during Putin's first term, left the presidential administration and government. As a result, the group dealing with foreign policy decision-making processes was limited to advisers with a similar background to the president himself which was not without significance for NRCs advocated by the leadership and the direction of RFP.

The most significant reshuffles in Putin's environment began toward the end of 2003 when Alexander Voloshin, chief of the Presidential Administration, resigned as a result of the Yukos affair. His departure was so meaningful because the presidential administration is widely considered as the most powerful institution in Russian politics (e.g. see Bremmer and Charap, 2007). Even more importantly, as already mentioned in the fourth chapter, Voloshin was considered to be the second most-important person in the country, who often made decisions for President Putin on important matters. According to Sergei Markov, a Kremlin-connected political analyst, Putin only approved international initiatives prepared by the Presidential Administration, in which Voloshin played the key role. In Markov's opinion, the administration set strategic goals and had the greatest influence on RFP while Voloshin was said to represent interests of a group that favoured closer relations with the West (Markov in Feifer, 2002). Indeed, Voloshin was considered a leader of a liberal, more pro-Western camp in the Kremlin and with his resignation, analysts began to question Russia's international path and Putin's commitment to democracy and market economy. Although he

was replaced by Dmitry Medvedev whose nomination was considered as a compromise among the various groups within the Kremlin, Voloshin's departure marked the beginning of weakening of the liberal faction in the Kremlin. Furthermore, during the reshuffle of the government in March 2004 the liberal Kasyanov lost the post of prime minister and Mikhail Fradkov, who was not a member of any faction but was considered as Sergei Ivanov's (the leader of the siloviki) protégé, was appointed in his place (see Kryshtanovskaya and White, 2005; Bremmer and Charap, 2007). This change was interpreted as another blow to the liberal camp, especially as Kasyanov's departure was accompanied with the dismissal of other Yeltsin-era ministers. These shifts did not change Russia's policy during the Rose Revolution which despite internal contestation remained pro-cooperative toward Georgia. In general, changes in the distribution of NRCs and course of RFP were rather slow and gradual and during the Orange Revolution Russia still valued partnership with the West which largely determined lack of aggressive actions toward Ukraine.

However, between the colour revolutions and the Five-Day War other important shifts in the power circles took place. Andrei Illarionov, senior economic adviser in the Presidential Administration offered his resignation in 2005 while German Gref, one of the leaders of the liberal camp and one of the most influential ministers, left in 2007. Since 2000 Gref had headed the ministry of Economic Development, the most important entity in economic/trade issues, which to a large extent was responsible for Russia's internal development – one of Putin's top priorities in the first and at the beginning of his second presidential term. Thus, his departure was significant not only for foreign policy course but also for general direction in which Russia was heading. Sergunin (2008, p. 70) points to some problematic relations between liberal-minded Gref and Russia's conservative foreign ministers and as such, his departure can be understood as another tilting of balance of power toward a more assertive and less economic-focused course of RFP. Furthermore, Aleksei Kudrin, finance minister and one of the last important members of the liberal camp left in 2011. In the context of Russia's international behaviour, especially the departure of Gref and Kudrin seems very important as both of them had influence on foreign policy, for example by constantly promoting Russia's accession to the WTO (see Feifer, 2002). In addition, after Voloshin's resignation, this meant the departure of even more advisers who advocated internal development and continuing reforms to this end.

In summary, with Voloshin's departure, which was considered a 'political revolution', the balance of power in the Kremlin began to shift. The analysis demonstrates that changes

in dominant NRCs and in RFP were taking place gradually, because around 2004-05, there was still a strong representation of liberals in power circles and because more hard-line and conservative politicians did not immediately gain the means to influence decision-making processes in the international sphere. Nevertheless, with time, the subsequent changes took place and when top figures from 2003 and 2008 or 2014 are compared, the absence of liberal advisers and important ministers dealing with economic issues can be observed. At the same time, there has been a growing number of siloviki who advocate restoration of Russia's position in world affairs, consider the West as a threat and enemy, and (some of whom) support nationalist views (see Bremmer and Charap, 2007, p. 89). Consequently, the analysis indicates that these changes in power circles contributed to the decreased importance of internal development and cooperation with the West as well as to more emphasis on the Russian world and the emergence of assertive NRCs that resulted in changes in RFP behaviour.

Decision-making processes: towards narrower and less formal

The changes within the Presidential Administration and government described in the previous section had also impact on foreign policy decision-making processes. The analysis of the four upheavals reveals that the most intense intra-Kremlin contestation took place during the Rose Revolution. Disagreements within the power circles also existed during the Orange Revolution but they were less significant. Indeed, during the Rose Revolution two opposing visions were promoted and taken into account until the very end which points to the pluralism of decision-making processes at that time. Despite voices calling for more assertive reaction, Russia's priorities remained focused on partnership with the West and the Russian leadership decided on a cooperative attitude toward Georgia. Consequently, during the Orange Revolution, despite official support for Yanukovych, Yushchenko had some proponents within Russian power and business circles. At the end, also in this case, Russian decision-makers, because of the importance of cooperation with Western partners, came to terms with developments taking place in Kyiv and recognised the new Ukrainian leadership. On the other hand, during the Five-Day War and especially the Euromaidan revolution, almost no disagreements within the power circles were found and for instance, there was no visible contestation of more assertive NRCs and decision to annex Crimea among the decision-makers.

The beginning of changes in foreign policy decision-making processes can be traced back to reshuffles at the turn of 2003 and 2004 as after Voloshin's departure, Putin began to

consolidate his power in the Presidential Administration. Indeed, although Voloshin was trusted by the president, he was considered as Yeltsin's rather than Putin's man. Furthermore, during the government reorganisation in March 2004, Putin took steps to make sure that the government would not pursue any policies against the Kremlin's plans and wishes as it used to do earlier. In other words, by appointing ministers who would not oppose the Kremlin's policy, the president aimed to minimize any internal contestation. Lavrov's nomination for the post of the Minister of Foreign Affairs was also considered to serve this purpose and for more than fifteen years in this position, he has proved to be a loyal implementer of the president's visions and orders but it is hard to consider him as a figure making key decisions, which was exemplified by his exclusion from the decision-making process on Crimea. Furthermore, the nomination of former Foreign Minister, Igor Ivanov as the secretary of the Security Council strengthened this body and was another move that weakened the government's position in foreign policy matters. Indeed, when one looks at future decision-making processes, they demonstrate that the government's role in shaping foreign policy, especially after the departure of the key economic ministers such as Gref and Kudrin, was marginal and its members were not consulted about the most important decisions.

Consequently, the above changes accelerated the transfer of decision-making processes from formal to less formal channels. Making these processes less formal, for instance by excluding the government, meant that even if there were still officials promoting less assertive NRCs during the two latter upheavals, they were largely excluded from the most important decisions. As with the changes described above, these shifts were slow and did not significantly affect decision-making processes during the two colour revolutions. However, they took root over time, which is best illustrated by the decision to annex Crimea that was taken by Putin and his most trusted advisers outside any formal institutions.

Finally, and related, the analysis indicates that Putin's leadership style also changed and the president was less and less willing to consult with advisers who could challenge some of his decisions. During his first and second term Putin used to discuss various issues related to domestic and foreign policy as well as defence and national security with a group of 7-8 people. However, this group of trusted advisers became smaller with time. For instance, even Medvedev, with whom Putin had discussed 'all the key issues of domestic as well as foreign politics' (Kryshtanovskaya and White, 2005, p. 1069), did not take part in the meeting about the future of Crimea. Consequently, in 2014 representatives of economic ministries, who

could have questioned the advisability of the annexation of the peninsula and warned of its economic consequences, were excluded from the decision-making process. In addition, Pavlovsky (2016) notes that Putin's decision-making became reactive and based on current threats rather than goals. This pattern can be seen in responses to the four upheavals. Reactions to the two colour revolutions were closely correlated with NRCs such as partner of the west or internal developer that assumed long-term reforms and plans of international cooperation. Neither the Rose, nor the Orange Revolution changed the dominant NRCs and these plans. On the contrary, the dominant NRCs in 2008, and especially in 2013/14, were to some extent a response to Western actions and additionally, were replaced by NRCs that resulted from events in Georgia and Ukraine, such as defender of compatriots and supporter of threatened people.

To sum up, there were different officials in the government and the Presidential Administration (including top figures) in 2008 and 2014 compared with 2003-04. As explained, these reshuffles did not immediately alter dominant NRCs and affect Moscow's international behaviour, but over time they slowly began to influence decision-making processes and the Kremlin's foreign policy course. As such, during the two latter upheavals there was no balance in views among the most influential figures and not enough voices within the power circles to contest more aggressive decisions toward Georgia and Ukraine. Furthermore, as a result of the above changes, decision-making processes in RFP became more informal and included fewer people. With time, this group was limited to the narrow circle of the president's most trusted advisers, many of whom Putin had known before the presidency, often from his service in the FSB. Consequently, the group of decision makers was narrowed to people with similar views on world affairs. Narrowed and less diverse circle of advisers can lead to incomplete and even more importantly, biased information and group-think processes. Indeed, various sources (e.g. see Myers, 2014) indicate that this was the case with the decision to annex Crimea. More generally, basing RFP decision-making process on increasingly small group of advisers, with similar background and views on international affairs, led to less emphasis on economic issues while more on geopolitical, military ones and zero-sum thinking about international relations, which contributed to reassessment of Russia's international duties and more assertive foreign policy behaviour. These findings question the popular image of the president, on whom everything depends (see Galeotti, 2019) and show that it is worth examining his circle of advisers, because the changes taking place in it affect Russia's international priorities and actions.

Benefits of the role theoretical and multi-level framework for (Russia's) FPA

The role theoretical analysis demonstrates that Russia did not perceive the Orange and particularly the Rose Revolution as major crises, especially compared with the events in 2008 and 2013/14. This research argues that these divergent perceptions resulted from different understanding of Russia's NRCs. In 2003-05 Russia was concentrated on internal development and as such, was less focused on international and regional issues. In addition, the leadership saw Russia as partner of the West which to some degree precluded the perception of the first two upheavals as a threat (for instance, during the Rose Revolution Russia's and US interests largely coincided). However, continued disagreements with Western actions showed Russian leaders that they were not treated as equal partners and that cooperation with the West was not as beneficial as they had hoped ('pragmatic disappointment'). At the same time, Russia strengthened internally, especially in the economic sphere which led to the leadership perception of their state being an increasingly important international player, without which changes in material factors would not have been so meaningful. The decreasing number and importance of liberal advisers around Putin, who could have opposed changing course of RFP, contributed to the rise of anti-Western sentiments and Russia's increasingly assertive international stance. Thus, role theory enables us to examine how this combination of external and internal as well as material and ideational factors led to the reassessment of Russia's NRCs and in consequence, to changes in RFP behaviour.

The above analysis demonstrates strengths of the multi-level approach used in this research, which allows to bring together arguments presented by realist, liberal and constructivist theories and shows how the interactions of different factors and levels of analysis influence Russia's international actions. Furthermore, the application of role theory to the study reveals actors' agency. Structural IR theories (particularly neorealism) might say that both the Rose and especially the Orange Revolution, when Russia and the West supported the opposing sides, would automatically hinder the mutual partnership. However, the role theoretical analysis demonstrates that the leadership strongly supported the partner of the West role which helped to maintain good relationships, at least for some time. In addition, the analysis of contestation processes challenges the unitary state assumption and demonstrates smaller or larger differences regarding RFP decisions and directions during all the four upheavals.

Furthermore, by applying multi-level model this research fills an important gap (Gotz, 2017; March, 2018) in the analysis of RFP. Consequently, a number of relevant points emerge from the analysis. First, it demonstrates the inseparability of external and internal factors in the study of RFP. Both groups of factors are crucial for the understanding of Moscow's international behaviour and their nexus is at the heart of explanations of RFP (see more in the concluding chapter). As such, emphasising the interactions of different internal and external factors, the project addresses some gaps in this area (see Pursiainen, 2000; Gotz, 2017), as it does by strongly focusing on Russian perceptions (see Suslov, 2016). Second, the analysis shows that RFP is largely reactive and as such, validates some similar arguments in the literature (e.g. Lukyanov, 2014; Lo, 2015), while refuting others (e.g. Lucas, 2008; Wilson, 2014). In addition, it confirms the importance of various upheavals both external (the colour revolutions, the Arab Spring) and internal (2011/12 protests) for Russia's understanding of international order, and thus for the leadership perception of their state's duties and responsibilities. The importance of these events can arise from the beliefs of Russian leaders and their perception of world affairs. As such, Putin's perception of chaos and state weakness as existential threats (Dyson and Parent, 2018, p. 93), his fear of repetition of a similar scenario in Russia (Zygar, 2016a) as well as general perception of the west as an enemy among siloviki (Bremmer and Charap, 2007) are all helpful in explaining the significance of this kind of events for RFP.

Further, the study demonstrates that this reactive foreign policy is often opportunistic and pragmatic. Indeed, strategic use of roles indicates that it was not an ideological shift in RFP and Putin's transformation from pragmatist to ideologue, as suggested by many authors (Sergunin, 2014; Wood, 2016; Zygar, 2018a), that was responsible for Russia's emphasis on protection of compatriots and the annexation of Crimea. In addition, these analysts speak about Putin's ideological transformation since his third presidential term. However, Russian leaders equally often spoke about duty to protect compatriots also during the 2008 war which again points to strategic employment of this NRC and more broadly, to the opportunistic use of nationalism as post hoc explanations of foreign policy actions (see Laruelle, 2015). Finally, a toned-down nationalist narrative internally after 2014 also indicates opportunistic and pragmatic considerations behind the annexation of Crimea rather than ideological ones and as such, validates the above arguments. As for the Russian presidents, the chapters on the Rose and Orange Revolution present an illustration of a predominant leader who is able to pursue his core preferences despite domestic constraints. These

chapters indicate that during the colour revolutions RFP reflected Putin's adherence to the NRCs of internal developer and supporter of anti-terrorist initiatives and as a result, to partner of the West role. Furthermore, the leadership adherence to pre-crises NRCs in 2003-4 but not in 2008 and 2013-4 once again implies pragmatic foreign policy. An alternative explanation might suggest the Kremlin's tighter control of the system in 2003-5 compared to the future upheavals. Consequently, it might indicate that despite his continuously strong position, Putin (or/and Medvedev in 2008) had to take into account stronger nationalist voices, especially after the intensification of crises in South Ossetia in 2008 and Ukraine in 2014. Some future research including interviews with the Kremlin insiders could shed more light on this issue.

Last but not least, a view across time taken in the analysis allows to recall often forgotten facts and events and to assess their significance in retrospect. As such, it points to Putin's pro-Western attitude at the beginning of his presidency which, however, pragmatically altered into a more assertive one with changing international and domestic contexts. Furthermore, by demonstrating how substantive shifts in the power circles might played a role in changes in Russia's international behaviour over time, the analysis refines explanations of RFP and contributes to a better understanding of it. Consequently, this research challenges very popular conception that Putin runs everything (see Galeotti, 2019) and indicates that processes shaping RFP are more complex and there are more actors who should be taken into account in the analysis of Russia's international behaviour (see concluding chapter). This points to shortcomings of approaches that 'black-box' the state and do not look inside it, in particular geopolitical ones, and validates arguments that emphasise the importance of multi-causal and multi-level analysis of (Russian) foreign policy.

9. Conclusions

The goal of this research was to contribute to the understanding of Russian foreign policy (RFP) and explain changes in Moscow's international behaviour by analysing reactions to the four upheavals in the post-Soviet space. In addition, the study aimed to contribute to role theory, especially in its application to non-democratic states and in the area of role change. The following chapter presents some major findings regarding RFP, role theory and broader foreign policy analysis (FPA) and international relations (IR) literature.

The inseparability of external and internal factors

Mearsheimer (2014), and Menon and Rumer (2015) explaining RFP behaviour write about the fundamental significance of international structure and external factors more generally. On the other hand, scholars, such as Lucas (2008) and Shevtsova (2014) point to the decisive influence of domestic situation on Russia's international behaviour. However, the analysis in all of the empirical chapters demonstrates that various external as well as internal factors led to changes in both the rhetorical level and orientation of RFP. More importantly, the applied role theoretical framework shows that the internal and external factors in RFP are so strongly intertwined that it is very difficult to speak about one group, leaving aside the other and that the interactions of the two should be at the heart of the analysis.

Indeed, the distribution of NRCs used by the Russian leadership demonstrates that during the first two upheavals Russia was truly interested in building partner relations with Western countries. However, the main reasons for the partnership with the West were internal: leaders' awareness of structural economic problems in the country and the necessity of Western investments as well as the terrorist threat. At the same time, such foreign policy course was possible due to an external factor: initially pro-cooperative attitude of the USA toward Russia. With time changes in both domestic and international conditions intensified. The time between the colour revolutions and the Five-Day War is a perfect example of the interactions of internal and external factors. On the one hand, Russia strengthened internally which led to the leadership perception of their state as an increasingly important player on the international stage. On the other, the West not only did not take this shift into account, but its actions (recognition of Kosovo, NATO enlargement plans) undermined the confidence of Russian leaders and built a sense of neglect of Russian interests, which only intensified the changes in Russia's NRCs. This overlapped with important shifts in the power circles which enabled and even accelerated the above trends.

Consequently, the period leading to the Euromaidan revolution is another illustrious example of the interplay of various factors. The Five-Day War and Western unilateral support for Georgia strengthened the belief among Russian elites about the hostility of the West towards Russia and the desire to weaken it. This perception was further reinforced by other important events: internal - mass anti-regime protests in Russia at the turn of 2011/12, which were supported by the West and led to the 'conservative turn' and external - the Arab Spring and Ukraine's plan to sign the AA with the EU. The combination of these different factors led to the progressive weakening of NRCs based on cooperation with the West and to the understanding of Russia's responsibilities as a counterweight to international actions of the West, which was also possible due to further shifts among Putin's closest advisers and changes in foreign policy decision-making processes. By exploring and emphasising these strong interactions of internal and external factors, the analysis points to limitations of approaches paying attention to either international or domestic sources of RFP taken separately.

A thorough analysis of interactions of different factors during the four crises shows careful balancing between domestic and international dimensions but also indicates changing weight of internal and external factors at different periods of time and depending on the situation. Trenin (2015) notes that no recent issue has brought Russia's domestic and foreign policies as intimately together as Crimea and Ukraine, but this research demonstrates deep interactions of external and internal sources also in the mid-2000s when Russia was strengthening economically and disagreements with the West were increasing. Consequently, Lo (2015, p. 24) writes that the 'nexus between domestic politics and foreign policy was never more evident than following the anti-Putin demonstrations of late 2011 and early 2012'. However, the analysis shows that these links were equally strong during the colour revolutions when Russia was focused on fight against terrorism and internal development and in both these aspects needed cooperation with the West and favourable international environment which in turn determined Moscow's foreign policy behaviour.

Nevertheless, it would be an oversimplification to say that Russia acts more assertively when it is economically strong (see Götz, 2017, p. 235 for a similar argument) but leads pro-Western foreign policy when the economic situation is worse or that it wants to distract attention from economic problems by aggressive international actions (Guriev, 2015). The analysis demonstrates that these processes are much more complex, bi-directional and co-constitutive. However, it also indicates some patterns. One can argue that when Russia is

stable internally and the leadership feels confident, the importance of external factors for its foreign policy behaviour increases. On the other hand, the significance of international situation diminishes when Russia faces internal problems - not only economic ones but also problems with the support for the regime and its legitimacy which can lead to a sense of insecurity among the leadership. In other words, in face of domestic difficulties, internal sources of roles become more important than international ones, such as external expectations. In such circumstances, foreign policy is instrumentalised and subordinated to domestic politics. However, it can be used not only for creating favourable external conditions for internal development, but may also serve as a tool to rebuild the regime's legitimacy and consolidate its support.

Furthermore, the analysis indicates that ideational factors were especially important when relatively quick changes in external and internal material factors took place. They determined how Russian decision-makers understood these developments and as a result, influenced the leadership perceptions of their state, international system and Russia's role in it. For instance, in the aftermath of Russia's rapid economic recovery and internal consolidation, Russian leaders more and more often began to perceive their country as increasingly strong international actor. However, this perception of Russia's new position and role was not recognised by Western states which led to increasing disagreements between Moscow and the West and to a sense of injustice and neglect of Russia's interests. As such, both self-perception of Russia as an increasingly important international player and the sense of being treated unequally, strongly contributed to redefinition of dominant NRCs and in consequence to the changes in RFP behaviour.

Finally, other internal factors – often forgotten shifts among Putin's close advisers as well as changes in foreign policy decision-making processes, which became less pluralist and less formal - were similarly important, especially during the crises. Indeed, during the Rose Revolution broader group of advisers guaranteed plurality of opinions in the Kremlin. It resulted in two, completely different approaches to deal with the situation in Georgia from which the one deemed more favourable to Russian national interests was chosen. On the contrary, during the 2014 Ukraine crisis, the key decision to annex Crimea was taken in a small group consisting of Putin and his closest colleagues. Crucially, all the participants had very similar background and according to analysts, similar views on Western actions, international system and Russia's position in it, which might have led to biased

representation of the situation and determined the outcome. The question of actors in RFP decision-making is addressed more broadly in the following section.

Overall, the analysis extending over a period of over ten years demonstrates that both internal and external factors were crucial for RFP behaviour and as such, indicates that even if realism or liberalism can attempt to explain some individual RFP decisions, neither of them alone can account for long-term changes in Russia's international activity. For instance, realist theory would neglect the key motivations behind Russia's partnership with the West during the colour revolutions. Likewise, realist explanations of Russia's more assertive foreign policy (see Mearsheimer, 2014; Sakwa, 2015) leave aside important domestic developments (both structural and at the individual level) and as such, present over-simplified or even distorted account of RFP behaviour. By the same token, the omission of external factors by liberal political accounts (Lucas, 2008; Wilson, 2014) results in an incomplete explanation of the deterioration of relations with the West, which was largely due to external sources. Furthermore, both positivist theories do not take into account ideational sources which played particularly important role during rapid changes in material internal and external factors.

Consequently, the analysis confirms the strong points of constructivist approaches (e.g. Tsygankov, 2016) that combine internal and external factors but place the greatest emphasis on perceptions and ideational factors in general. That said, this research shows that constructivism should pay more attention to material factors which, for example, in the analysed period were the basis for change in Russia's self-perception. Furthermore, it indicates that identity alone may be a too static concept to account for changes in states' international behaviour. For instance, even after the change in Russia's self-perception, the leadership advocated various NRCs and Russia's international actions were not homogenous (e.g. reset in mutual relations with the US and soon after the annexation of Crimea). In addition, the importance of changes among the Russian power circles as well as the significance of President Putin for RFP behaviour indicate that constructivist approaches need to focus more on individual level of analysis and agency. Last but not least, this research demonstrates the usefulness of multi-level analysis. However, contrary to complex multi-factor explanations that emphasise the predominance of geopolitical conditions (Gotz, 2017), it shows that it is rather a mix of various domestic factors (structural, individual, ideational) that is decisive in the processes shaping RFP.

More than just the president: actors in foreign policy decision-making

This research leads to several important conclusions regarding different actors and their changing roles in RFP decision-making processes. First, it confirms President Putin's key importance as a final decision-maker in international affairs. However, contrary to many interpretations that appeared after his return to the presidency speaking about Putin's transition from pragmatist to ideologue (Sergunin, 2014; Wood, 2016; Zygar, 2018a), the analysis rather indicates the impact of the President's pragmatic approach on RFP behaviour. Yet, despite Putin's very big influence which was visible in all the four cases (pro-cooperative reaction toward the two colour revolutions despite internal opposition; ability to resist nationalist pressures for more radical solutions in 2008 and 2014, and to take the decision about Crimea in a small group of closest advisers), the analysis demonstrates that he does not have an entirely free hand in international issues. Consequently, it shows that the impact of views other than dominant is not necessarily minimal, as suggested by some analysts (e.g. see Charap, 2004; Radin and Reach, 2017, p. 82), and that there are conflicting interests and various opinions on international issues within and outside the Kremlin, which points to the importance of different interest groups and power relations between them. Indeed, the analysis demonstrates that in a situation where Putin's worldview has been rather consistent over time (Dyson and Parent, 2018, p. 91), it is worth focusing on his circle of advisers in order to explain some changes in Russia's international behaviour. Furthermore, and related, changes in RFP after the departure of important liberal advisers indicate that it is important to examine not only who is around the president and in the power circles more generally, but also who is absent and as a result, what kind of arguments may be missing or may be poorly represented in internal debates.

Second, the analysis shows that public opinion in Russia matters for foreign policy decision-making (but see section on vertical role contestation below). It is revealing that during the four analysed upheavals there was no foreign policy decision taken against the vast majority of Russian society and actions of the Russian leadership were generally in line with public expectations. Furthermore, contrary to some previous research (e.g. Lo, 2003), the examination of public opinion polls demonstrates that Russian society is not indifferent to the international situation and Russia's place in the world, and leaders' statements show that the Kremlin is aware of these moods. This indicates that although the public does not have direct channels to influence foreign policy, Russian authorities make efforts to shape public views on international issues and the Kremlin takes them into consideration when

making foreign policy decision. The analysis also implies that the significance of the public consent about international actions and its importance for processes shaping RFP increases when the regime feels less confident. As such, Russian public opinion can act as a constraint or a push on leaders' ideas and actions in the international sphere. These findings are in line with some broader arguments about the public constraints in (semi-) authoritarian states. Authors (Schedler, 2002; Weeks and Crunkilton, 2016) write about elections in non-democracies that 'take on a life of their own', which means that even if organized only for the facade, the authorities (as well as the opposition) still care about their results. As such, if public opinion has their preferences regarding foreign policy, as in Russia's case, their support or dissatisfaction may act as a push or a constraint on international decisions. Consequently, FPA analyses of non-democratic regimes should pay attention not only to public moods and their changes, but also to regimes' efforts, for example through state control media, to shape public preferences in the light of important international decisions. More attention paid to this dialectical mechanism and mutual influences between the authorities and public opinion may broaden our understanding of situations and foreign policy decisions when the importance of public opinion particularly increases.

Third, this research indicates that opposition should not be excluded from the analysis of RFP. Although opposition parties did not play a key role in shaping Russia's international behaviour, the analysis demonstrates that the rhetoric presented by opposition leaders was not insignificant for RFP. This was especially the case before and during the Five-Day War and the Euromaidan revolution when official positions adopted by decision-makers were close to those that had been advocated by members of nationalist opposition. This indicates that although Russian nationalists may not have access to foreign policy decision-making processes, their presence in both media and parliament means that they are able to influence (at least to a certain extent) the public debate in Russia. As such, the authorities may be vulnerable to nationalist pressures, especially when the regime has to appeal to more conservative voters in order to retain (or regain) public support. In addition, nationalists are a useful barometer of public moods and can serve as 'testers' of public support for various, often more radical, international solutions (see more in the contestation section). On the other hand, this research demonstrates that pro-democratic opposition, to which more attention is devoted in the West, had little, if any effect, on shaping RFP which was especially visible during the 2014 Ukraine crisis. This has been the case at least since Putin's third term, but arguably even since 2005-2006, that is since the aftermath of the defeat of liberal parties

in the parliamentary elections in 2003. It indicates the importance of absent actors not only among the power circles but in general among the elites. At the beginning of the 2000s nationalists were considered as outliers, were largely isolated from the elites and RFP was more pro-cooperative, pro-Western and less assertive. Consequently, liberals and their views were largely absent from the mainstream since mid-2000s, that is since more unilateral NRCs began to dominate and Moscow's international behaviour began to be more assertive. Thus, in future analyses it is worth looking not only at actors (opposition, intellectuals) who are among the elites but also at those who are absent or no longer there.

Bringing the two above points, it is important to note that when the contestation among the opposition was the strongest, that is during the 2014 Ukraine crisis (and to a lesser extent in 2008), what opposition leaders said resonated with public opinion. Consequently, it is less relevant whether leaders of the systemic opposition acted independently from the Kremlin or not, because what they said permeated the public space, was often in line with the expectations of Russian society and thus, could have influenced the decisions of Russian leaders. The best example of such a mechanism are Zhirinovsky and Zyuganov's appeals for the protection of Russian compatriots in Ukraine, which after the aggravation of the situation in this country were incorporated by Russian decision-makers. As such, it confirms Sergunin's (2008, p. 59) statement that 'a country's decision-making system not only reflects foreign policy debate in the society, but it also is to some extent a product of this debate'. It indicates that future research on RFP, and that of other non-democratic states should take into account opposition forces and intellectuals who have tools (the media, membership in the parliament, personal links to the leadership) to frame the public debate on international issues. In addition, it is important to examine what these actors (especially nationalists) say during crises, in particular those unexpected ones when the regime was not prepared to shape the public attitudes and may incorporate NRCs and/or propositions advocated by various members of the opposition, and elites more broadly.

Fourth, and related, this research indicates that the role of parliament in RFP is bigger than commonly acknowledged (see Mankoff, 2009; Feklyunina, 2019). In this regard the findings support some research on the role of parliaments in non-democracies which show that the existence of these bodies should not be underestimated and that they deserve a closer look (Magaloni and Kricheli, 2010; Brancati, 2014) because they often may have meaningful effects 'rather than being mere "window dressing"' (Weeks and Crunkilton, 2016, p. 7). At the same time they contradict other studies, especially early research on

authoritarian politics, which downplayed the role of institutions in these regimes (e.g. see Friedrich and Brzeziński, 1961).

Russia analysts (e.g. see Feklyunina, 2019) write about the limited role of the Duma in shaping RFP. This research adds some nuance to our understanding of it. On the one hand, it confirms that it is indeed difficult to list the parliament among the most important players formulating RFP but on the other, it shows that the Russian Duma has a strong symbolic role. Because Russian leaders constantly describe Russia as a democratic state, especially when repelling Western opinions about growing authoritarianism, it would be strange and inconsistent with this argumentation if important foreign policy decisions did not go through the parliament (notable examples are appeal to the President to recognize the independence of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, and a vote on Crimea – see below). Gel'man (2008, p. 922) notes that parties in the Duma have negligible influence on policy-making and that their main task is getting President Putin's policies through the parliament, which is in line with the symbolic role that is supposed to confirm the existence and operation of 'democratic mechanisms', which (as research argues) also applies to foreign policy decisions. A vote on Crimea's admission to the Russian Federation is illustrative in this regard. The document was supported by 443 parliamentarians, however, the only one who voted against, Ilya Ponomarev, was later accused of embezzlement and now lives in exile. The punishing of Ponomarev for voting against incorporation of Crimea indicates how important the symbolic meaning of the parliament is to the leadership, which validates the above argumentation.

Furthermore, and related, the parliament serves as a place where deputies can demonstrate their attachment and loyalty to the Kremlin (see Krol 2017, p. 450) and as the example above shows, opposition on key issues is not welcomed by the authorities. Consequently, it is important who sits in the Duma and whether members of parliament are willing to support the Kremlin's international initiatives. The analysis demonstrates that during the two colour revolutions and especially the Rose one, the liberal views were part of the mainstream and were presented by some decision-makers. On the contrary, during the Five-Day War and especially, the Euromaidan revolution the liberal voices were barely heard both within the regime and among the opposition. The beginning of decreasing importance of liberals on international (and other) issues goes back to the December 2003 parliamentary elections which were lost by liberal parties, none of which got into the Duma. Thus, liberal voices became less audible and as such, the regime did not have to refer to their arguments and criticism. Shortly after the 2003 elections, a similar trend occurred among members of

the government and the presidential administration. In addition, as a result of the electoral defeat of the Union of Right Forces and Yabloko, the party of power, United Russia, became relatively moderate force compared to other parties in the parliament. At the same time, the constant presence of nationalists in the Duma guaranteed that their arguments were heard. Moreover, the regime allowed nationalists to flourish to present United Russia and the Kremlin as even more moderate compared to these radical voices and at times, incorporated those international ideas or views that were gaining popularity among the public. It points to the 'managed pluralism' (see below) and shows that although the parliament does not play any direct role in RFP decision-making and does not decide about foreign policy course, it serves as a forum for debate which guarantees a certain level of 'audibility' and the possibility of reaching out to citizens. As such, parties left outside the parliament become less threatening to the regime, which in consequence, does not need to incorporate their views and ideas in a way it would have to do in case of their presence in the Duma and their voices being herd by public opinion.

Managed pluralism in foreign policy

The above findings indicate that the Balzer's (2003) 'managed pluralism', which affects religion, political parties, the media, civil society, business associations, and federal relations and which is one of the concepts that most accurately describes the character of the regime, applies not only to Russian domestic politics but also to foreign policy. The analysis demonstrates that also in international realm the regime does not attempt to dictate a single vision of RFP but tries to 'restrict the palette to shades and hues compatible with familiar landscapes' (see a description of the concept in Balzer, 2003, p. 191). In other words, different ideas about Russia's place in the world system and Russia's international behaviour are allowed but the regime restricts views which are considered too different from those preferred by the authorities, that challenge them or that are perceived as dangerous. As such, when Russia led pro-Western foreign policy at the beginning of the 2000s liberal views were, at least to a certain extent, part of the mainstream while nationalist ones were largely marginalised. However, when foreign policy priorities changed and RFP behaviour became more assertive, nationalist views on RFP were admitted to the public debate while those more liberal and pro-Western were almost completely marginalised. As such, it is even more important to look at the power circles (government and presidential administration as well as informal groups of advisers) which try to keep control over these issues. Indeed, the

analysis indicates that the above processes were co-constitutional with shifts among the President's advisers and changes in the elites' views.

Consequently, as 'stifling all independent expression and political diversity is neither possible nor desirable' (Balzer, 2003, p. 210), the regime allows foreign policy debate but only within accepted parameters. In other words, this selective admission of opinions on international issues to the public debate means that managed pluralism simultaneously allows or even sometimes encourages some voices on Russia's international behaviour while at the same time mutes those considered as undesirable. However, as changes in the RFP debate in the analysed period demonstrate, these parameters are not permanent and can be fluid. As such, it is the regime who encourages pluralism at the same time setting (often unclear) boundaries, which cannot be trespassed, as in case of Zhirinovsky's criticism of Lavrov and RFP which was rebutted by President Putin (RIA, 2013). In addition, undesirable opinions on RFP are tolerated but only in channels that reach limited number of people like the Internet and some printed media. On the other hand, voices considered as acceptable are allowed in the national television which reaches the majority of Russians. As such, only voices considered as 'constructive opposition' are admitted to foreign policy debate, while those considered as 'hysterical', 'treacherous', etc. are not. However, it is worth noting that the definition of what is constructive and not is very arbitrary. In this way, in foreign policy realm, as in other areas, the regime promotes pluralism at the same time limiting the diversity of opinions.

The divergence in the use of NRCs among the leadership (e.g. Lavrov and Putin during the 2014 crisis) may also point to managed pluralism within foreign policy realm. By presenting various NRCs, such as advocate of Ukraine's sovereignty and defender of compatriots, leaders appealed to various groups without creating any threat for the regime. Such actions may be aimed at orchestrating the public discussion, and support of public opinion shows that these efforts are often successful. In addition, in this way the regime can test public support for different conceptions but still within the acceptable boundaries that, as already noticed, can change with the evolving internal and external circumstances. This implies even greater importance of the nexus of internal and external factors, which influences the boundaries of what is and what is not acceptable in the realm of international politics.

Consequently, in foreign policy, as in other areas, managed pluralism gives the public an impression of diversity (albeit limited) and the possibility of supporting a different agenda

than the one proposed by the ruling regime. At the same time, this controlled diversity is better for the regime than a closed authoritarian system as it gives the Kremlin feedback about the public's expectations and preferences in the international realm, creating a possibility of changing a position from one to another, as during the 2014 Ukraine crisis. Moreover, it is not a coincidence that the Kremlin has been constantly located closer to the centre in relation to other actors admitted to public debate on foreign policy. In this way, it has invariably retained the image of a moderate and representing the majority of Russian society. That was the case both at the beginning of Putin's era when the regime presented a less pro-Western position than the liberals and at a later stage when it took a less assertive stance in international affairs than nationalists. These findings indicate that future research on RFP should focus not only on the narrative and statements of the leadership but also other forces admitted to public debate because the direction of this debate as well as views and opinions of its participants may indicate the direction in which RFP is heading. By the same token, analysts examining other hybrid or even authoritarian regimes should not only focus on the authorities but also other actors who are allowed to be a part of public debates, no matter how independent they are, as it can show whether processes shaping foreign policies in other non-democratic states are characterized by similar mechanisms.

To sum up, the above findings imply that it is important to analyse not only contestation of domestic politics in Russia (e.g. Martus, 2017) but also of the international realm as decision-making processes in foreign policy are not necessarily less complex and have fewer actors than those in domestic issues. As such, in order to understand RFP, it is not enough to focus on President Putin, his leadership and personality but it is important to take into account other actors, such as his inner circle, opposition and public opinion. These conclusions have some wider implications. They indicate that even in authoritarian and hybrid regimes decision-makers are not omnipotent, they take into account public opinion and are constrained by it as well as, at least to a certain extent, by opposition and other members of the regime. As such, foreign policy decision-making processes in non-democracies are less straightforward than it has been commonly assumed (see the last section). Consequently, if parliament, opposition and public opinion are not without significance in foreign policy decision-making, it indicates that these processes in (semi-) authoritarian states are not necessarily much different from those in democracies.

Contributions to role theory: different roles, their changes and contestation

This research has sought to contribute not only to the understanding of Russian foreign policy but also to the role theoretical scholarship. This section begins with the description of different types of roles identified in the analysis, then examines changes in roles and foreign policy behaviour and finally, speaks about contestation processes.

Types of roles and their changes

The analysis of Russia's NRCs indicates that at least two important distinctions into types of roles can be made. First, they can be divided into master and auxiliary roles. This dichotomy and hierarchy between roles was particularly visible during the Rose Revolution when the internal developer acted as an overarching role which determined the use of other NRCs. It is important to note that although the partner of the West was the most often used NRC, the analysis indicates that its dominance resulted from the salience of domestic development for Russian leaders which led to the emphasis on international cooperation and in particular, on partnership with Western countries. Furthermore, the general understanding of Russia's roles as internal developer and partner of the West, determined the perception of Russia's regional responsibilities as a mediator. A similar mechanism was present during the Orange Revolution. Because the leaders considered building anti-terrorist coalitions as one of Russia's main international duties, they emphasised the importance of partnership with the West, which was Moscow's main ally in this struggle. This understanding of foreign policy responsibilities and focus on international cooperation again led to the perception of regional role as a mediator between the conflicting parties. As such, in both cases auxiliary roles were consistent with the master one and role conflict did not exist.

Other dynamics took place during the Euromaidan Revolution. In the first phase of the crisis the most often used NRCs such as, defender of the peace and advocate of states', especially Ukraine's, sovereignty were complimentary and there was no dissonance between them. However, when in the second phase the NRC of defender of compatriots became dominant, it came into conflict with support for Ukraine's sovereignty. In this situation, Russian leaders less often emphasised the need to protect sovereignty of their neighbour and instead, began to speak about support for Ukrainian people. These role relations are important because they 'can enhance our insight into the complex patterns of the overall foreign policy behavior of states' (Breuning and Pechenina, 2019, p. 16). Indeed, knowing a master role we can have some expectations regarding states' auxiliary roles, while looking

at both we can infer whether there is a possibility of role conflict and if yes, it implies that some changes of or adaptions in auxiliary roles or even some modifications within master roles can be expected. Furthermore, as Thies (2013, p. 3) writes, if an auxiliary role is consistent with the master role, then it should be accepted internationally and by significant others.

Second, the analysis demonstrates the existence of general, permanent roles and temporary ones, strongly dependent on the current situation, which were 'activated' only during crises. NRCs such as partner of the West and supporter of international law were used before, during and after the analysed upheavals, regardless of the events in Ukraine and Georgia. However, two NRCs: defender of compatriots and supporter of threatened people gained prominence only after the 2008 and 2014 upheavals intensified and as such, were strongly reactive to external events.

The issue of general and temporary roles is closely related to the problem of role change and the analysis revealed two types of such changes. The first one is related to shifts in dominant roles during the crises and was briefly described above. The second one concerns more fundamental and long-term changes in the leadership perceptions of Russia's international duties and responsibilities which affected the RFP course. The slow process of moving away from the perception of partnership with the West as essential for Russia's development as well as diminished emphasis on domestic economic reforms in general led to the change in dominant roles and adoption of new ones, such as supporter of the new European security architecture and advocate of states' sovereignty. Consequently, the dominance of these more assertive roles enabled the emergence of temporary roles during the upheavals in 2008 and 2014. The adoption of these temporary roles was also possible because the general understanding of Russia's regional duties was different and the leadership perceived Moscow's role as a guarantor of regional order rather than mediator.

Consequently, this research argues that it is worth paying more attention in the role theory scholarship to the analysis whether NRCs used by the leadership are (not) temporary ones. This issue is important because it is likely that temporary roles may be used strategically during important and especially unexpected situations and just after them to justify foreign policy actions taken in reaction to these events, which again points to the importance of showing consensus, also in hybrid regimes. As such, it is important to examine NRCs after a crisis of some kind to see whether conceptions dominant during it are still among the most frequently used by the leadership. It can tell us whether a NRC was used strategically or

a proper role change took place and if yes, whether these changes were consolidated. At the same time, strategic and temporary use of roles implies agency and influence of decision-makers, and the necessity of their analysis in studies dealing with states' foreign policy.

Furthermore, and more importantly, this research speaks to some limitations of the current role theoretical research (see Breuning, 2017, p. 13) and indicates that apart from the above case of strategic use of roles, it was role change which led to changes in foreign policy behaviour rather than the other way round. Indeed, as long as Russian leaders saw their state as partner of the West, Russia did not react in an aggressive way and what is even more revealing, did not perceive the colour revolutions, especially the Rose one as major crises. However, when as a result of important changes in the combination of factors, the leadership understanding of Russia's international duties changed and dominant NRCs proved to be no longer acceptable, RFP behaviour became more assertive and also leaders' perception of regional upheavals altered which determined more decisive reactions in 2008 and 2014. It shows that the NRC framework can be a useful tool in explaining states' foreign policy behaviour as well as in forecasting future changes in their international activity. This indicates that scholars should pay more attention to what leaders say and how they perceive their states' duties and responsibilities as well as in response to what kind of external and internal events these perceptions of international obligations change.

As already signalled, the only exception to the above rule were shifts to temporary roles that, arguably, largely resulted from events in Georgia and Ukraine and which, at least to a certain extent, were employed to justify more aggressive actions to the Russian (and international) public. As such, the change of dominant NRC into defender of compatriots is a good example of strategic use of roles which was triggered by external events and in combination with other factors resulted in the particular foreign policy decision. It suggests that strategic employment of roles is facilitated and more likely when the window of opportunity in the form of important external events appears. In addition, contrary to the supporter of threatened people, the NRC of defender of compatriots shows that role change can also take place through adaptation of NRC that previously had a different meaning. However, as already mentioned, the emergence of these roles would not have been possible without a deeper change in the understanding of Russia's international responsibilities.

Consequently, this research indicates relevance of sources of change presented by Harnisch and colleagues (2011, p. 252), such as uncertainty about roles resulting from shifts in relative power capabilities and the conception-performance gap (a gap between actual

behaviour and ego expectations). It implies that we are more likely to expect role change and in consequence, shifts in states' foreign policy when their material capabilities quickly rise (or decline) and when (as a result) states' international behaviour ceases to meet the leadership expectations. As such, it is important to pay more attention to the analysis of leaders' perceptions of international duties and responsibilities during and after periods of such changes. Indeed, as demonstrated in different chapters, Russia's changing material capabilities as well as rising leaders' expectations about their state's position influenced changes in dominant NRCs. Furthermore, the analysis points out that, using Harnisch and his colleagues' (2011, p. 252) typology, role change which took place in RFP evolved from learning to transformation as first there were changes of foreign policy goals but in later periods of analysis changes in Russia's interests (for example in the post-Soviet space) can also be observed. Last but not least, it is worth noting that the role change took place due to important shifts in domestic and international conditions but still not in response to key events in Russia's history. As such, it demonstrates that landmark events in a state's history, as in Maull's (1990) analysis of Japan and Germany, are not necessary conditions for shifts in dominant roles to take place.

Referring to Gustavsson's (1999) model of foreign policy change, the analysis demonstrates that in Russia's case 'a crisis of some kind' was not necessary for leaders to reconsider dominant NRCs and for foreign policy change. It was rather the combination of various external and internal factors which were gradually impacting the leadership perceptions of Russia's duties and responsibilities that in consequence led to changes in RFP behaviour. At the same time, it emphasises the importance of Gustavsson's second and third variables, that are 'fundamental structural conditions' and 'the strategic leadership'. Indeed, throughout the analysed period important changes in external and internal conditions both economic and political ones took place. However, these factors could have had no significant impact without 'the leadership' variable - changes in Russian leaders' perceptions of their country (seeing it as an increasingly important player on the international stage) as well as shifts within the Russian power circles and in decision-making processes. Consequently, rather than 'a crisis of some kind', it was incremental changes caused by the combination of various internal and external factors that led to more assertive RFP behaviour which resulted in aggressive reactions to the upheavals in 2008 and 2014. It indicates that leaders do not need external shocks to change their states' foreign policy behaviour, however, the

appearance of such events can provide a useful justification for changes and lead to their radicalisation.

Finally, the leadership perception of Russia as an increasingly important actor points to the importance of agents' subjective view of the international system and their place in it (see the last section) as well as to the relations between roles and identities. This research demonstrates that the changing self-perception was one of the factors behind the shifts in dominant NRCs. As such, it validates earlier role theoretical scholarship that separated these concepts (Harnisch, 2011; McCourt, 2011, 2012). Furthermore, the analysis shows that states can have multiple NRCs within one identity which indicates that identities are more stable concepts than roles. It points to some limitations of constructivist approaches which assume a direct link between identity changes and states' foreign policy behaviour (e.g. see Hopf, 1998) and indicates the existence of an intermediate variable in the form of roles. As a result, future constructivist and role theoretical studies need to pay more attention to set of roles available within identities and circumstances that affect changes in dominant NRCs within a specific identity. Overall, through the integration of different factors as well as emphasis on and nuancing of various key dimensions discussed above, the study contributes to the scholarship on FPA. It also demonstrates the usefulness of the role theoretical approach in the analysis of foreign policy-making and foreign policy change which improves our understanding of these phenomena.

Role contestation: not only democratic phenomenon

Changes in Russia's dominant NRCs which resulted in more assertive foreign policy behaviour were possible because new role conceptions did not encounter enough contestation from both the opposition and public opinion. On the contrary, it seems that despite the existence of some contestation processes, the new NRCs generally had a lot of support among the Russian elites and the public. As such, vertical contestation was not strong enough to change the NRCs dominant among the leadership, however, Russians had their preferred NRCs and it is informative that generally decision-makers did not advocate roles which were not popular among the public

The examination of statements delivered by the Russian opposition indicates that role contestation was greater during the Five-Day War and the Euromaidan revolution than during the two colour revolutions. This conclusion is thought-provoking because in this period Russia became more authoritarian and less pluralistic. The analysis suggests that the increased contestation resulted from liberal opposition to more assertive NRCs adopted by

the leadership and in particular, from stronger position of Russian nationalists who, for example, from the beginning of the Euromaidan revolution questioned support for Ukraine's sovereignty and urged the leadership to protect Russian speaking minority from 'Ukrainian fascists and nationalists' before Russian decision-makers began to speak about it. Generally, the increased contestation during the upheavals in the post-Soviet states, best exemplified by disagreements during the Euromaidan revolution when crisis decision-making processes reflected some debates over Russia's NRCs, points to the importance of domestic politics and internal divisions over Russia's appropriate roles. As such, the examination of contestation processes allows to see the elevation of power of some groups, such as nationalists, more hawkish members of the government and presidential administration during crises and especially after their intensification. These findings have some broader implications for FPA and IR scholarship as they add nuance to some foreign policy theories which say that opposition parties are often unable to influence foreign policy decisions (Brummer and Thies, 2016). These authors also note that even if opposition parties oppose NRCs advocated by the government, they are often outmanoeuvred by the authorities. However, this research, and especially the chapter on the Ukraine crisis, shows that opposition can not only contest dominant NRCs, but the roles firstly advocated by the opposition can be adopted by the leadership. Overall, a role theoretical analysis focussed on contestation processes enables us to better understand the nexus of domestic politics and foreign policy.

Furthermore, the identification of role contestation in Russia questions the argument about elite consensus on RFP course (Mankoff, 2009, p. 5) and corroborates previous studies which described such processes among democratic (Wehner and Thies, 2014; Brummer and Thies, 2015; Walker et al., 2016) and authoritarian states (Jones, 2017). The project findings show that also in non-democracies it is worth looking at opposition actors who are able to influence, even if to a limited extent, foreign policy debate, that is those who are members of parliament and/or have access to (often state controlled) media. Consequently, they indicate that it is important to examine what opposition leaders say, in particular in the time leading to the key international decisions, as well as whether and which of their ideas and propositions are later incorporated by the leadership. Such an analysis can show whose statements and under what circumstances (e.g. crisis situations) are most likely to impact dominant NRCs and states foreign policy behaviour and as such, can point scholars towards actors whose speeches they should pay attention to in the future. In addition, it implies that also other actors who may have different conceptions on the state's role in the international

arena and are important in individual countries (military, business elites, etc.) should be part of the analysis. At the same time, the analysis demonstrates that despite horizontal contestation, it was the Kremlin's support that was decisive for the maintenance of particular NRCs which confirms that 'a strong executive will more likely than not drive the role contestation process' (Cantir and Kaarbo, 2016b, p. 179). As such, it once again indicates that formation of foreign policy in authoritarian and hybrid regimes is not necessarily much different from democracies, especially those with strong presidency (also see Breuning and Pechenina, 2019: 16).

Finally, it is worth mentioning that the initially dominant NRCs, such as partner of the West, internal developer and advocate of international anti-terrorist initiatives were partly contested internally but were largely accepted by the West (especially the role of regional mediator during the Rose Revolution), that is Russia's main significant other. In this period, Western leaders also spoke about partnership with Russia and the common fight against terrorism. Furthermore, statements of Russian decision-makers which emphasised the need to close the gap between Russian and Western democracies and which spoke about Moscow's efforts to join Western-led international institutions suggest that at that time Russia wanted to be socialised into the 'Western system' and more importantly, that Russia paid great attention to Western expectations.

However, Russia's newly dominant NRCs, such as advocate of the new European security system and defender of compatriots were not recognised by Russia's significant other who through continued expectations for democratic transformation tried to impose on Russia roles such as 'democratic state' or 'member of (Western-led) international community'. At the same time, increased Western criticism of Putin's reforms and condition of Russian democracy further contributed to the decreased significance of partner of the West role at home. In addition, roles which the West tried to socialise Moscow into were contested in Russia, in particular by nationalists, who emphasized their state's duty to unify the Russian world and instead of integration with the West, spoke about Russia as Eurasian power and its responsibilities in this area. With time, the leadership also began to distance from the roles which the West sought to socialise Russia into, hence the emphasis on 'sovereign democracy' and more frequent presentation of Russia in contrast to the West, especially since the 'conservative turn' in 2012. Overall, the analysis indicates that Russia was able to play dominant roles during the first two upheavals as they were largely accepted by significant others and, for example, Russia acted as a mediator during the Rose Revolution.

On the other hand, the fact that NRCs dominant during the 2008 war and the Euromaidan revolution were not accepted by Russia's significant others implies that it was much more difficult or even impossible for Russia to perform them. Nevertheless, further analysis is needed to establish whether dominant NRCs were actually enacted by Russia.

Limitations and future research areas

Indeed, one of the main limitations of the study is the lack of empirical confirmation of whether Russia really performed on the international stage according to dominant NRCs. Future research can address this issue by analysing, for instance, Russia's voting patterns in international organisations, such as UN Security Council or Moscow's (lack of) engagement in various international initiatives and juxtaposing the results with dominant NRCs. Another important limitation of this research results from leaving external expectations outside the scope of the analysis, especially since role theorists have shown that external expectations can influence states' NRCs (e.g. see Wehner, 2015). The analysis indicates that at the beginning of Putin's era Russia paid more attention to Western expectations regarding its international roles or that alters expectations were more in line with the leadership understanding of Russia's duties and responsibilities. As such, further research in this area that would pay more attention to statements of significant others and Russian leaders' reactions to them is needed to determine the impact of alter expectations on role contestation and role selection processes, and in consequence, on RFP behaviour. Consequently, such an analysis could contribute to a better understanding of the impact of external expectations on the international roles of (semi-) authoritarian states.

Finally, although it was possible to infer the attitude to some roles from statements delivered by members of the Russian opposition and from public opinion polls, the difficulties with the identification of NRCs among opposition and the Russian public is another limitation of this research. For similar reasons the analysis does not include important behind the scene actors, such as Vladislav Surkov and Igor Sechin, who very rarely speak publicly. Interviews with opposition leaders and intellectuals as well as interviews and/or surveys of public opinion that explicitly ask about support for NRCs could help overcome these barriers. Consequently, similar avenue can be taken in case of intra-Kremlin contestation as interviews with the Kremlin insiders could shed some new light on internal contestation and foreign policy decision-making processes more generally. Moreover, future studies should pay more attention to mechanisms of vertical role contestation, especially in non-democratic regimes.

This connects to a broader problem of operationalisation of public moods in authoritarian states 'where no or restricted media pluralism exists and no freedom of expression is granted' (Kneuer, 2017, p. 9).

In addition to the research gaps mentioned above, there are other important research avenues which could and should be explored in the future. First, the analysis of contestation processes could include other important actors, such as business circles, or Orthodox Church in Russia's case, and examine how their role conceptions differ from those of the leadership and what is potential influence of these conceptions on foreign policy behaviour. A similar analysis of other hybrid regimes could show whether the processes shaping foreign policy in other non-democracies are characterized by similar mechanisms. Consequently, the application of role theory and juxtaposition of contestation processes in democratic and (semi-) authoritarian states during a similar international situation could be a useful avenue for further comparative research on role contestation and foreign policy-making processes which might demonstrate whether and how the regime type influences states' dominant NRCs.

Second, studies examining role change should focus not only on factors that lead to a shift in dominant roles, but also on conditions that make consolidation of new roles more likely. When analysing role change, it is also important to look what type of temporary roles are generated from general NRCs, how often these roles are in conflict and if yes, what are the implications for general and temporary roles, and states' foreign policy behaviour more broadly. Furthermore, narrative analysis could give some insight into the problem of the strategic use of roles and demonstrate how these new NRCs are narrated. In addition, a comparative analysis of role changes in different states could show how often shifts in dominant roles result from a change in leadership and when they are driven by pragmatic considerations of decision-makers. Finally, future research can compare whether great and middle powers employ divergent NRCs versus different, more and less powerful actors and areas of interest.

Broader implications of the research

The insights produced by this research go beyond the analysis of RFP and role theory and seek to connect and contribute to FPA and IR scholarship. The findings described above highlight the value of looking inside the 'black-box' and analysing various domestic processes and actors. As such, they point to limitations of realist theory of IR. Indeed, in all case studies

there were important domestic factors that influenced dominant NRCs and RFP behaviour. In addition, this study challenges neorealist assumption about structure shaping agents' behaviour. The analysis indicates that these relations are rather bi-directional and actors' understanding of the international system can significantly affect their and their state's foreign policy behaviour. As such, this research confirms findings presented by Brummer and Thies (2016) which say that role theoretical studies, especially including role contestation, can give much more agency to actors - both leaders and opposition - than traditional FPA and structural theories of IR. Likewise, it speaks to Özdamar's (2016) argument about role theory's usefulness in understanding the link between the agent, the structure, and the agent's subjective perceptions of the agent-structure relationship (in particular see chapters 4 and 5 vs chapter 6). Indeed, the study emphasises the importance of agent-structure relations for proper understanding of states' foreign policy and demonstrates the effectiveness of role theory in the study of this phenomenon.

Further, the relevance of external factors for Russia's international actions indicates shortcomings of liberal explanations focused on regime survival. Consequently, the diversity of actors and factors that influenced changes in RFP as well as the importance of Russia's perspective for understanding its foreign policy decisions point to limitations of positivist approaches and to the usefulness of constructivist ones which put the issues of perception and identity at the centre of the analysis. The importance of ideational factors for changes in RFP also demonstrates the advantages of constructivist theory of IR. At the same time, this research shows that one should not completely depart from the assumption of actors' rationality as the case studies reveal that the leadership decisions, especially Putin's, were often driven by pragmatic considerations. Strategic use of roles by Russian leaders reinforces this argument. Role theory also helps to show the coherence and rationality of some decisions that seem contradictory or irrational at first glance, as in case of a change in Russia's position during the Orange Revolution.

Furthermore, the analysis of changes in dominant role conceptions as well as of domestic contestation processes contribute to the understanding of foreign policy change. This research demonstrates that changes in the leadership perception of Russia's duties and responsibilities led to different reactions to regional upheavals and generally, more assertive foreign policy behaviour. As such, the analysis indicates the centrality of 'the leadership' factor, even when key decision makers do not change. At the same time, it shows that also in non-democracies contestation processes, especially those among the elites may have

influence on changes in state's international actions. As such, all case studies demonstrate the importance of individuals and agency, and once again point to limitations of structural approaches in IR which struggle with the rationale behind the dominance of different roles over others and the reasons for changes at particular moments of time. Thus, the way 'agents respond to structure and employ roles vis-à-vis other agents highlights the fact that structures do not deterministically impose behaviors but rather become part of the domestic political "game."' (Cantir and Kaarbo, 2016c, p. 187). Consequently, this research validates the suitability of multi-level approaches in the analysis of states' foreign policy.

This study also speaks to FPA research which has shown for decades that domestic agreement over a state's international actions is rare (see Cantir and Kaarbo, 2016, p. 2) and demonstrates that foreign policy decision making processes in (semi-) authoritarian states may encounter similar issues, or may be even more vulnerable to problems such as group-think, incomplete information and internal struggles of different factions than democracies. This research contributes to the literature that questions widespread image of authoritarian leaders as unconstrained and unaccountable (Weeks and Crunkilton, 2016, p. 2) and may link to studies which examine the role of parliaments in states' foreign policy (e.g. Kesgin and Kaarbo, 2010). In addition, the project findings are in line with some studies on war and peace as well as economic cooperation which indicate that 'elite constraints tend to produce more peaceful and more selective national security policies' and lead to more international economic cooperation (Weeks and Crunkilton, 2016, p. 13). Indeed, as long as Russia's power circles were larger and more diversified, RFP was more focused on economic issues and less on geopolitical ones, including Russia's position in the post-Soviet space. However, when foreign policy decision-making processes began to become increasingly informal, narrow and include people with homogenous background, RFP started to become more assertive and Moscow engaged in foreign policy adventurism (intervention in Georgia, annexation of Crimea, war in Syria). Overall, this research concurs with some recently presented arguments about the possibility of authoritarian regimes facing important domestic audiences and, thus the need for the examination of preferences of those players (both members of the elite and public opinion) (see Weeks, 2012). Consequently, it points to potentially rich research agenda focused on comparison with other hybrid and authoritarian regimes and their different types (military, one-party and personalist) in order to determine the influence of the regime type on foreign-policy decision making processes.

To conclude, changes that took place in RFP in the analysed period culminated in the annexation of Crimea and Russia's military intervention in Syria. However, the toned-down nationalist narrative by the Kremlin (for example during the 2018 presidential elections) as well as Russia's disengagement from the conflict in Eastern Ukraine indicate that Moscow does not intend to constantly clash with the West and engage in further military adventures. Regained in 2014, and falling but still remaining at a high level, support for Putin and the lack of fundamental changes among his advisers (but see below) in the Kremlin suggest that if there are no unexpected crises, particularly in the post-Soviet space, one should not expect changes in RFP behaviour in the near future.

Nevertheless, the end of the last constitutional period of Putin's presidency in 2024 is approaching fast. Although at the time of writing these conclusions there are many indications that the president may want to stay in office for the next term, in the coming years an increased 'fight of bulldogs under the carpet' can be expected, especially in case of Putin's decision to exit from the presidency or leave Russian politics at all (less likely), which may result in internal anxiety and unexpected international decisions. In such a scenario, the course of RFP may largely depend on the new balance of power in the Kremlin and, more broadly, among Russian power circles, especially since the recent appointment of the technocratic prime minister, Mikhail Mishustin, seems to be a temporary solution or at least the one which will not alter the existing balance among different groups. If there are no major reshuffles or an increase in the position of more liberal officials, softening of RFP toward the West and some post-Soviet states, such as Ukraine is unlikely. On the other hand, if liberals, who are still present among the Russian elites, although not at the highest level, increase their influence, one can expect a thaw in relations with the West, especially in the economic sphere, which will also depend on the economic situation in Russia. Consequently, acceleration of economic growth and maintenance of internal stability should favour a moderate foreign policy behaviour, but the one still emphasising the protection of Russian national and security interests. On the other hand, persistently low economic growth or the recession, combined with decreasing confidence in the government, constant accusations of corruption and increasing fatigue with the same rulers, may lead to unleashing of nationalist sentiments and to strengthening of besieged fortress narrative by the regime. Such a scenario may result in an increased international assertiveness, especially in case of a major crisis in Russia's near abroad.

Finally, Moscow's foreign policy will depend on the international context and especially on behaviours of Russia's significant others towards it and its key interests. If Western countries, especially the US, pursue a policy that neglects Russia's interests and does not take into account Russia's status, as was often the case before the 2008 war, the Kremlin's more assertive foreign policy as well as more or less serious misunderstandings and crises in relations with the West should not come as a surprise. Consequently, Western increased involvement in the post-Soviet space or its support for the Russian opposition in its attempts to overthrow Putin's regime, may result in the growing popularity of nationalist forces as well as increased influence of the anti-Western faction within the Kremlin, which may not be without significance during the potential succession in 2024. As such, the configuration of the above factors will determine the Russian leadership understanding of their state's duties and responsibilities on the international stage which will, depending on the level of domestic contestation, to a greater or lesser extent influence Russian foreign policy behaviour in the future.

10. References

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